


EDGAR WALLACE

THE GREEN RIBBON



ARROW



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THE GREEN RIBBON

She flew ahead, heard the sound of a struggle behind her and fled towards the cottage. Then something rose in front of her, and she stood stock still. The scream that rose to her throat was never uttered; she was paralysed with fear, for four green eyes looked out of the blackness, and suddenly she heard a hideous howl from the Things before her which made her blood turn to ice.

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Flat 2

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The Mixer

On the Spot

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The Twister

When the Gangs Came to London

Edgar Wallace

THE GREEN RIBBON



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Introduction

BY PENELOPE WALLACE

Whoever reads a book by Edgar Wallace has the feeling of knowing him, for he puts so much of himself into every page—his beliefs, his likes and dislikes and perhaps, above all, his sense of humour.

It was his contention that the writing of an author must be backed by experience and during his life he achieved experience in such varied fields as newsboy, printer, milkboy, medical orderly, publisher, special constable, war correspondent, journalist, racehorse owner, film director, playwright and author.

He was born in Greenwich on the 1st April, 1875. His father was an actor, his mother an actress—they were not married. When the boy was nine days old he was adopted by a Billingsgate fish porter and grew up in Greenwich and the surrounding parishes. Intelligent and observant, and having that quality of humanity which enabled him to understand as well as to observe, he acquired in his boyhood the knowledge and love of London and her people which can be felt in so many of his books.

After he left school he tried a variety of jobs ranging from printing to plastering. At eighteen he joined the

Army. In 1896 his regiment was transferred to South Africa. Here he wrote a poem in honour of the arrival of Rudyard Kipling, *Good Morning Mr. Kipling*; he was hailed as 'The Soldier Poet' then in 1898 a book of his poems was published under the title *The Mission That Failed*. This was the first of the 173 books which were published in the following 34 years.

In 1899 he bought himself out of the Army and was engaged as a correspondent to cover the South African War for Reuter and later for the *Daily Mail*. By an ingenious scheme he scooped the signing of the Peace Treaty. The *Daily Mail* was delighted; Lord Kitchener was furious and permanently banned him as a war reporter.

With the war at an end he became the first editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* but later returned to England to the London *Daily Mail*. Here as a reporter he covered crimes, trials and hangings. He stored up knowledge of crime and criminals and he learnt two practical lessons—economy of words and the ability to meet a deadline; and later as racing correspondent for various papers, he acquired his affection for racing which proved invaluable for his books but highly detrimental to his bank balance.

His first novel *The Four Just Men* he published himself in 1905; but his success as an author stemmed from the stories of Africa which he wrote for the *Tale Teller* and which were later published as *Sanders of the River*.

During the years that followed he wrote books, plays and articles. His success and his enormous output—in 1926 he had 18 books published—enabled him to live in a far different way from the early days in Greenwich; but he was never ashamed of his early poverty only rightly proud of his achievement.

Edgar Wallace had a remarkable memory which enabled him to work out the complete plot of a new book without making notes; invariably he wrote the first page in longhand, dictating the rest to his secretary or into a dictaphone according to the time of day—for sometimes he would work far into the night and sometimes he would begin extremely early in the morning, always fortified by half-hourly cups of tea and with a plentiful supply of cigarettes to be smoked in his long holder. His powers of concentration were immense; his young children could go to his study at any time with their problems; sleepless guests would call in for a cup of tea—but these interruptions had no effect on his chain of thought.

He worked hard and almost his only relaxation was racing and, in the summer, a journey up the river to Maidenhead in his motor launch the *Miss Penelope*.

In November, 1931, Edgar Wallace took up yet another profession, he went to Hollywood to write film scripts; he worked at his usual speed and in nine weeks he had written four scripts, including *King Kong*—this in addition to alterations to a play, short stories, articles and the long letters to his wife which were later published as *My Hollywood Diary*.

He planned that his family should join him in Hollywood before his return to England in April, 1932; but early in February he developed a sore throat; this, however, was no ordinary sore throat for rapidly it became double pneumonia and within three days he died. He died but his books have lived; fast moving and vital they have taken countless readers out of their ordinary lives and into the world of master criminals and little crooks; of murder and robbery. A world where right triumphs and

a world which confirms that it is impossible not to be thrilled by Edgar Wallace.

The Green Ribbon—first published in 1929—has a racing background; but it is not so much the sport of kings as the business of the shady. The setting is Surrey and Detective Inspector Luke rounds up a varied collection of rogues who range in villainy from the evil Dr. Blanter to the near-honest Trigger.

Walking up Lower Regent Street at his leisure, Mr. Luke saw the new business block which had been completed during his absence in South America and paused, his hands thrust into his trousers pockets, to examine the new home of the wealth-bringer.

On each big plate-glass window of the first and second floor were two gilt T's intertwined, and above each a green ribbon twisted scroll in the form of a Gordian knot.

He grinned slowly. It was so decorous and unostentatious and businesslike. No flaming banners to call attention to the omniscience of Mr. Joe Trigger and his Transactions. Just the two gilt T's and the green ribbon that went so well with the marble doorway and the vista of mahogany desks and the ranks of white glass ceiling lights above them. It might have been a bank or a shipping office. He took a newspaper out of his pocket and opened it. It was a sporting daily and on the middle page was a four column advertisement:

TRIGGER'S TRANSACTIONS

Number 7 will run between September
1st and 15th.

Subscribers are requested to complete
their arrangements before the earlier

date. Books will close at noon on August 31st and will not be reopened before noon September 16th.

Gentlemen of integrity who wish to join the limited list of patrons should apply:

The Secretary,

Trigger's Transactions, Incorporated,
At the Sign of the Green Ribbon,
704 Lower Regent St., W.1.

He read the few words which occupied so large a space, folded up the paper, replaced it in his pocket and resumed his walk.

'Gentlemen of integrity' was the keynote of Mr. Trigger's business. It was much easier to join an exclusive West End club than to enrol your name in Mr. Trigger's card indexes.

Luke came to Piccadilly Circus and crossed over, glancing at the big clock in a jeweller's window. He prided himself on his perfect timing: he had a margin of five minutes.

There is a restaurant in Wardour Street which enjoys a very good dinner trade, but attracts few patrons at the lunch hour, since lunchers prefer the noise and bustle of a busy dining-room rather than the discreet seclusion of a private room. There are no less than three entrances to this small establishment and Luke knew them all. He wasn't quite certain of the room, however; but a waiter, who thought he was a fourth and expected member of the luncheon party, showed him the door of the apartment.

He went in without knocking; and three men, who were sitting at the table, looked up simultaneously.

One was a red-faced giant of a man, with broad shoul-

ders and a mop of grey hair. The second was also a big man, sallow-faced and as gloomy as his sober suit. The third was fat and small, with the tiniest black eyes that ever looked from so expansive a face.

'Good morning and God bless this congregation,' said the visitor, closing the door softly behind him and dropping into the vacant chair. 'Rustem can't come: his boat's held up by fog in the channel. Why he doesn't come overland is a mystery to me. If I had his money . . .'

'Listen, Luke, who the hell asked you to come in?' exploded the big, red-faced man.

'Nobody, Doctor,' said Luke.

He was lean and brown, a lithe and lanky figure of a man with smiling eyes and an air of boredom.

'Nobody asked me to come in. Hello, Trigger,' he addressed the fat little man. 'How go the Transactions? That's a posh office of yours. I nearly went in to get a folder. I thought you'd like to hear that I'd got back from the Golden South. Hello, Goodie! How are you? Goin' to Doncaster or a funeral?'

The sallow-faced Goodie said nothing but looked pleadingly from one to the other of his companions.

'This room is private,' roared Dr. Blanter, his face purple with rage. 'We don't want any damned policemen here. Get out!'

Luke looked round the table.

'Enough sin here to stock hell for years,' he agreed pleasantly. 'What's the conference about? Fixin' up the Doncaster programme? What's the swindle, Trigger! I like your new place in Regent Street—green ribbon appliquéd on the window. True lover's knot—that's an idea.'

Dr. Blanter, who by his attitude and speech proclaimed

himself the dominant member of the party, succeeded in controlling a temper which was not always susceptible to control.

'Now, see here, Sergeant . . .'

'Inspector,' murmured the other. 'Promoted for exceptional merit and devotion to duty.'

'I'm sorry, Inspector.' Dr. Blanter swallowed. 'I don't want to make any trouble for you or for myself. You've no right whatever to force yourself on me or any of these gentlemen. I don't want to know you—policemen are all very well in their place . . .'

'They have no place, no home, nobody loves 'em,' said Luke sadly.

'Been on vacation, Mr. Luke?' The stout Trigger sought to infuse a little geniality into the discussion.

'Yes, South America. Nice country—you ought to go there, Doctor.'

'I daresay,' Doctor Blanter forced a smile, 'but I'm a busy man, old boy. I'm trying to get a living out of racing and so are these gentlemen . . .'

'I could get a living out of racing, too.' Luke had a maddening trick of breaking into the conversation and spoiling the most carefully prepared speeches. 'I could have had a thousand a year from you for not being too observant.'

'Have you ever found us—me out in any dirt?' demanded the doctor, his voice rising. 'Have you ever known me to put a foot wrong? Look here, Luke, I'm getting a little bit sick of you and your interference. Tomorrow I'm seeing the Commissioner and there's going to be trouble!'

'Trouble? What have you been doing? Just mention my name to the Commissioner and all will be well.'

Dr. Blanter leaned back in his chair.

'Well, what is it?' he asked, resigned.

Luke shook his head.

'Nothing, just being a bogey man to scare naughty boys into being good boys. Thought you'd like to know I was around—active and intelligent. What's going to win the Leger, Mr. Trigger?'

The stout little man forced a smile. There were beads of perspiration on his forehead which he did not attempt to remove. Possibly he did not wish to advertise his perturbation, though such an advertisement was unnecessary.

'Burnt Almond looks like the one,' he said conversationally. 'They're pretty sure of his chance at Beckhampton, and they *know*! I shan't have a bet on the race.'

'Wise man.' Luke nodded approvingly.

He got up laboriously from his chair.

'What's Transaction No. 7? One of Goodie's?'

The sallow-faced man shook his head.

'No, Mr. Luke; at least, I hope not. Mr. Trigger is too good a friend of mine to use—um—information I give to him for his—um—business.'

'He's a "gentleman of integrity" too, is he?'

Luke smiled, moved at snail's pace to the entrance and stood there for a moment, the edge of the door in his hand.

'I'm around—that's all,' he said and went out, closing the door noiselessly.

None of the three spoke until—

'Take a screw outside, Trigger,' said the doctor, and the fat man made a reconnaissance.

'He's crossing the street.' Goodie was staring out of the window which commanded a view of the thoroughfare below.

'Lock the door; sit down. What the hell's he come here for?' rumbled the doctor. 'That fellow makes me sick!'

'Rustem hasn't come back then?' asked Trigger. 'His clerk said he'd be in this morning. Pity we didn't ring him up.'

Dr. Blanter marked something and made a silencing gesture.

'Now about this horse, Goodie . . .' he began, and thereafter they were not interrupted.

There used to be a brass plate on the door of Mr. Rustem's office inscribed :

Arthur M. Rustem,
Solicitor,
Commissioner of Oaths

One day the plate was unscrewed and there was substituted one that was smaller and less imposing.

Mr. Rustem was on vacation at the time; was, in point of fact, staying at the Danielli, where he occupied a handsome suite commanding a view of the Grand Canal and the beauty which is Venice.

He had received the news in the form of a telegram which ran :

'Your case heard in courts today. Starker argued case brilliantly but judge ordered your name struck off rolls.

Regards,
Pilcher.'

He was eating an ice cream on the Piazza of St. Mark when the telegram was brought to him by the hotel courier. He read it through without the least sign of emotion and, calling for a cable form, wrote:

‘Change door plate to A. M. Rustem.

Thanks.’

He tipped the messenger and went on eating his ice cream. He was not distressed by a happening which before now has driven philosophical lawyers to suicide.

It had been a foregone conclusion that the court would strike him off; he had been lucky to escape a prosecution. A great fuss to make over a miserable few thousand pounds extracted from a silly old woman’s estate. She was dead anyway; and her heirs were stuffy people in the Midlands who were so rich that it was indecent of them to make a fuss at all, especially as the money had been refunded. But there it was; the Law Society had adjudged him guilty of unprofessional conduct in making irregular investments with trust funds, and the brass plate must go.

He administered only one other estate and that was so unimportant that it was hardly worth while to a man who was worth considerably over a hundred thousand pounds and had an assured income of ten thousand a year. Why on earth he had allowed himself to fool around with the Apperston funds heaven knew.

A month later he came back to London, approved the plate on the door and passed into his luxuriously furnished office. Pilcher, his clerk, greeted him with a grin of welcome. Pilcher was a sharp young man, who wore an air of prosperity not usual in solicitors’ clerks.

He enjoyed a good salary, made quite a lot of money on the side from betting, patronised Mr. Rustem's own tailor, and went to the same barber, for Pilcher had taken his employer as a model and hoped one day that he would own an expensive car and be in so strong a financial position that he could afford to be struck off the rolls without blinking.

'Bad luck, Pilcher; I'd better transfer your indentures to Doberry and Pank,' was Rustem's greeting.

He sat down and glanced at the urgent correspondence awaiting him.

Pilcher's small and homely face twined into a contemptuous smile.

'What's good enough for you, guv'nor, is good enough for me. I'm chucking the law.'

He pronounced it 'lore'. Mr. Rustem had long since given up all attempts to purify his subordinate's English.

'Chucking the lore, are you?' murmured Rustem good-naturedly. 'Well, you're wise. There's nothing in it and you stand to be shot at all the time. Phone to Gillett's and ask them to send a manicurist over—the blonde one—what's her name? Eileen.'

'She's on her 'olidays,' said Pilcher, 'but there's a new girl—a peach.'

He went to the outer office to telephone. Rustem frowned and smiled through his correspondence. He smiled rather readily, this very good-looking man of forty. He did not look forty. His olive skin was flawless and unlined. His black hair, brushed back from his forehead, was thick and polished. His clothes were perfectly cut—no man had even seen him wear the same suit two days in succession. It was generally believed that he was of Oriental origin: 'Rustem' was distinctly a name that

came from Southern Europe. He had many traits which were more peculiarly Eastern—as a linguist, for example he was unique in his profession.

Old Pervin, K.C.—that untidy cynic—once said:

‘Rustem could suborn witnesses in ten languages and blackmail in twenty.’

As a youth he had been the lifeboat of every big swindler in the country, securing acquittals in the face of overwhelming evidence. There was not a professional thief in Europe who had not, at some time or other, sat opposite this youthful looking man and ‘told him the strength’. He had defended murderers and sold their confidences to newspapers after they were well and truly hanged. His big safe had held stolen property worth thousands of pounds against its illegal owner’s release from prison. When Mrs. Lamontaine was acquitted of poisoning her husband, she came to Arthur Rustem’s office and he showed her the packet of arsenic he had taken after a private search from a secret drawer in her desk. If the police had found this packet, she would have gone to the gallows. It cost Mrs. Lamontaine half the little fortune she inherited from her husband to buy his services and the other half to buy his silence, for she was ignorant of the fact that a murderess cannot be tried twice for the same offence.

Pilcher came back.

‘The girl’s coming over,’ he said. ‘She’s a bit refined—but she won’t last fifteen minutes with you, guv’nor.’

Rustem smiled at this tribute to his fascinations and turned to his papers.

‘Elizabeth Gray,’ he tapped a letter, ‘she’s the girl who came into old Gray’s property, isn’t she?’

Pilcher nodded.

'She's been up once—there's one for you, Mr. Rustem. Pretty! Gawd bless my life, she's a picture. *And* a lady! Young? About twenty-two, I should think.'

Rustem heard without a great deal of interest. Pilcher's standards of beauty were notoriously odd: he had deceived his employer before by enthusiastic descriptions which were never quite realised in the flesh.

'I want to get rid of this Gray estate,' he said. 'It isn't worth more than a few thousand. She's sole heiress, isn't she?'

Pilcher agreed.

'I'll get the schedule,' he said.

He came back with a foolscap folder and Rustem glanced through its contents.

'Gillywood Farm—um. I'd forgotten that—but Goodie has fifteen years' unexpired lease. Longhall House, where's that?'

'On the farm, don't you remember? About ten acres. You tried to get old Gray to lease it with Gillywood, but he wouldn't. He was born there or something.'

Rustem nodded.

'She might lease it,' he suggested. 'Mr. Goodie spoke about it the last time I saw him. Naturally he doesn't want anybody there overlooking the training ground . . .'

'The gallops are hers, too,' interrupted the clerk. 'About a thousand acres of downland. Gray only gave a five-years lease of 'em and that's nearly expired.'

Rustem closed the folder and looked thoughtful.

'It's curious that I should have forgotten all about it—but I've been so used to bossing the estate that I've almost forgotten it was the property of somebody else.'

In this sentence he epitomised his attitude towards all trusts.

'No, that must stay in our hands obviously. Pretty, is she?'

'As a picture,' repeated the other with relish. 'Not a big girl—on the small side. English, too. I mean, though she's lived in South America she's not a bit foreign. And she's got heaps of stuff. Old Gray was her uncle, wasn't he?'

Rustem believed so. He was interested now. He knew little about the late Donald Gray, except that he lived in the Argentine and owned cattle ranches. Mr. Rustem had never met him—the English estate of the dead man had been handled by his late partner in the days when the law firm of Rustem was called Higgs, Walton, Strube and Rustem, and was a respectable business.

'Yes—she's probably rich. These South American ranchers are millionaires, some of them. Pretty, eh?'

The arrival of the manicurist suspended the discussion; and Rustem was so engrossed in the mental discussion of the Gray estate that he made no effort to challenge her refinement.

'What makes you think she's rich,' he asked when the girl from Gillett's had gone.

Pilcher smiled.

'She's got a Rolls and a chauffeur, suite at the Ritz, an' she's so 'aughty. You know what I mean. I tried to get friendly, asked her 'ow she liked England an' whether she'd come over to get a nice husband . . .'

Rustem stared at him coldly.

'Oh, you did, did you? What a lousy little pup you are, Pilcher! Got all fresh and friendly, did you? I suppose you didn't ask her what she was doing that evening?'

Pilcher smiled: he was not hurt. Quite a number of

people had tried to hurt the feelings of this young man without any conspicuous success.

'All wimmin are alike to me,' he said with easy contempt. 'No, as a matter of fact, I didn't. She's one of these cold women. Hard as nails, I'll bet you. No, I just passed the time of day.'

'Phone her and tell her that Mr. Rustem has come back especially from the Continent to see her and ask her when it will be convenient for her to call.'

'Why not pop round and see her . . . ' began Pilcher.

'Do as you're told, you poor little rat,' said Rustem without emotion.

Pilcher did as he was told, leaving Mr. Arthur Rustem to the consideration of a problem.

He had hardly time to marshal certain conflictions of interest before Pilcher was back, his mean face beaming.

'Coincidence. She's . . . '

He jerked his head towards the outer office.

'Miss Gray?'

Pilcher nodded.

'She's got an old boy with her—foreigner.'

Rustem thought for a while.

'Will you ask her to come in?' he said.

Pilcher went to the door, opened it and closed it again.

'What about the old boy?'

'If he wants to come in, he must come in,' said Rustem with admirable patience.

Pilcher disappeared and returned in a short while, ushering in the visitor with an elaboration of politeness which might have passed as an example of old world courtesy, but probably did not.

Rustem stood by his desk, very sleek, very much the

man of affairs, wondering whether that unfortunate dispute of his with the Law Society was the reason for this visit.

For once Pilcher had not lied. This lady was more than pretty—she was beautiful even to so discriminating and fastidious a connoisseur as Arthur Rustem. The suns of South America had not destroyed a complexion which was without fault, her figure was completely satisfying. He began to take a new interest in the Gray estate. A grave-eyed young woman, very self-possessed, utterly oblivious of the physical attractions of her agent.

‘Mr. Rustem?’

Before he could do more than nod :

‘I’m Elizabeth Gray, Donald Gray’s niece. My banker wrote to you from Buenos Aires and my uncle’s lawyer . . .’

Rustem had seen her seated, had glanced Pilcher out of the room. Now he himself sank into the deep chair and was giving her his profound and deep attention.

‘Naturally I remember,’ he said, in his best family lawyer style. ‘Your estates in England, Miss Gray, are not very extensive, but they are, I think, valuable; and you would be well advised to hold them, although I have received one or two tempting offers, especially in regard to the Gillywood Farm. I think the Longhall estate you might very well have . . .’

‘I’ve come to see you about Longhall,’ she said. ‘I intend living there and I understand that part of my grounds has been used by my tenant, Mr. Goodie.’

Rustem frowned.

‘Of course!’ he nodded quickly. ‘I’m afraid I’m responsible for that. Mr. Goodie asked permission to use the barns and the stables . . .’

‘That’s all right.’ Her smile was quick and rather sweet. Her incisive and business-like tone was not quite in tune with her romantic possibilities. ‘Only he can clear out now, because I want to go down there and put the place in order. Who has the keys?’

Rustem was staggered by the decisive note and thought it was a moment to assert himself.

‘Mr. Goodie has the keys. I can get them in a day or two,’ he said. He shook his head. ‘But I’m not so sure that you’ll like Longhall, Miss Gray. Have you seen the place?’

She shook her head.

‘It’s rather a rambling sort of house and, I’m inclined to think, not very healthy. You would perhaps be better advised—I’m speaking more as a lawyer than an estate agent . . .’

‘But you aren’t a lawyer, are you, Mr. Rustem?’ There was nothing offensive in the question, unless her innocence was assumed. ‘I understood that you had left the practice of the law.’

He recovered himself quickly and smiled.

‘There was a little disagreement between myself and the Law Society, but nothing of any great consequence,’ he said airily. ‘We have a rather old-fashioned code in this country, and it’s very easy to step over the edge.’

He was angry with himself, to find that he was apologising to this pretty stranger, more angry that he, who invariably led all situations, and had held his own in some that were infinitely delicate, should find himself floundering behind. If she had been less pretty it would have been more easily borne; he would, at any rate, have been spared the confusion which was now his. She gave him little chance to recover.

‘Where is Mr. Goodie now?’

‘He has, I believe, gone to Doncaster,’ said Mr. Rustem, rather ruffled. ‘I was to have met him yesterday, but my arrival in England was delayed by fog. Doncaster is a town in the north of England . . .’

‘I know where Doncaster is,’ she said. Again that smile came and went. ‘He has the keys?’ She looked thoughtfully at the carpet. ‘There’s a race meeting, isn’t there—of course, the St. Leger. I may go up and see him. Do you know where he’s staying?’

Mr. Rustem did not know where this young lady’s tenant was staying. His interest in Mr. Goodie was not to the extent of keeping track of his movements.

Elizabeth Gray rose unexpectedly. She was nothing if not abrupt.

‘I should like to see you next week, Mr. Rustem, about the estate, I mean. Perhaps you’ll get in touch with my lawyers.’

She opened her bag and took out a card, which she laid on the table. Before Arthur Rustem could recover from his surprise she had left him with a little nod, opened the door before he could reach it and, collecting her companion, who had been sitting gazing soberly and solemnly at a royal calendar hung on the opposite wall, she passed out into Lincoln’s Inn Fields, so quickly that Pilcher, who was checking up a schedule in his little office, did not see her go.

Elizabeth Gray stopped on the sidewalk and looked at her companion. He was a man of some age, dressed in sober black and a soft black sombrero which would have revealed his identity in Buenos Aires, but had an eccentric look in the streets of London. A patient, sad-eyed man, older than his years.

‘Well, Mr. Garcia, he was right.’

Mr. Garcia looked blank.

‘Are you sure?’ he asked almost pleadingly. ‘It is wrong, perhaps, my dear Elizabeth, to jump at conclusions. This man on the boat—he was, I grant you, a very pleasant gentleman but he may have made a mistake—who shall not make mistakes? You must not jump to conclusions, my dear child.’

She smiled ruefully.

‘I can’t get to them any other way. Mr. Rustem isn’t a nice man, very sleek, very, very oily and suave—and dangerous. I’m glad he isn’t my lawyer.’

She had signalled the car; it drew up noiselessly to the kerb and she entered, followed by the old man.

‘I’m going down to Berkshire to look at this home of mine,’ she said determinedly. ‘I’m sure there’s some swindle in it. And then I’m going to Doncaster. Will you come?’

He shook his head and pulled nervously at his little white beard.

‘No, my child, I must go to Germany. I simply ache to see my dear Vendina. Perhaps they will let me buy him back,’ he said wistfully. ‘It was madness to sell. But then they told me, my studgroom, my nephew, everybody, that I am impracticable and will end in bankruptcy, and the sum offered was too good for me to refuse.’

He sighed heavily: For Vendina, by Craganour out of Vendira, was something more than a thoroughbred three-year-old which he had bred and nursed from ugly foaldom to four-year-old maturity. He was—in the eyes of Alberto Garcia—the supreme colt in the world, and when he had been sold to a German stud-farm one half

of the old man's life had been blotted out.

'Sentimentalism is stupid—I am stupid. It is generally acknowledged.' He spoke slowly with only the slightest trace of a foreign accent. 'I should have raced him myself.'

He looked sadly out of the window and shook his head at some unspoken thought.

'Perhaps they will let me buy him back. Think of it, Elizabeth, not one letter have they sent to me about him. Is he well, is he ill, did he endure the voyage, were they astonished at his beauty when he arrived at the Heras? They are completely heartless, these German buyers.' The story of the tragic sale of Vendina was familiar to the girl. From any other person in the world these everlasting references to his lost horse would have been tiresome and boring, but she loved this old man, her uncle's closest friend.

'Have you seen Mr. Luke?' he asked, and she almost jumped, for she too had been thinking of that shipboard acquaintance.

'No, I haven't seen him since we left the ship.' Then suddenly, 'Will you come with me now: it's little more than an hour's drive. They may have the keys at the house.'

He looked at her, almost frightened.

All his life old Garcia had followed the dictates of his blood—he was pure Spanish on both sides of his house.

'*Mañana, mañana!*' he murmured. 'Tomorrow is also a day, my little friend. You must not hurry me. I am an old man and I am not used to this—hustle is the word is it not? I must go to Germany . . .'

In the end there was a compromise. They lunched to-

gether at the Ritz and left for Berkshire in the early afternoon. She drove the car herself.

She did not like Mr. Rustem, and she gave her impressions of the lawyer on the journey down.

'I'm sure he's a horrible man,' she said.

Old Garcia sighed.

'I did not see him—but I understand your prejudice. Alas! I myself am unreasonable about people. When that unpleasant Englishman came to take away my dear Vendina . . .'

She listened to the oft-reiterated story of Vendina's sale. If she had not known otherwise, she would have thought that the old man had never bred any other horse. He had, as she knew, bred thoroughbreds all his life. But Vendina was different.

'He would follow me about like a dog. I could never bear the thought of his going into a racing stable, to be beaten by these terrible jockeys . . .'

'This must be the place,' she said, and slowed the car.

Gillywood Cottage was invisible from the roadway. Two high red walls, one of which, as she afterwards discovered, surrounded her own property, turned at right angles here and formed a lane which led to the cottage. The entrance to this lane was barred by a high steel gate which, to make sure of the complete seclusion of Goodie's training establishment from even an adventurous dog, was covered with a thick wire-netting.

She got out and pushed the gate; it opened, and she drove the car down the drive. At the end of fifty yards the drive turned sharply to the right and there was another iron gate and beyond that, at a very little distance, the cottage, all white and green. This entrance was closed

and locked, but there was a hanging bell, and this she pulled.

As she stood waiting, Elizabeth looked round, puzzled. At the top of the high walls was another 'run' of wire mesh held in place by stout, steel uprights, evidently fixed in the brickwork. Looking through the bars of the gates, she saw that where the brick wall ended a fence of wire-netting began, so that the house was enclosed in a sort of huge cage.

Another curious circumstance which struck her was the heavy iron bars which covered all the windows in sight. It was more like a prison than a country house.

Yet, she could admire the perfect order of the place, the weedless semicircle of gravel before the cottage, the trim lawn, the scarlet geraniums that filled green-painted tubs. To the left she saw the corner of the new stables, and beyond, the white escarpment of the quarried downs. Perrywig Caves must be there. Uncle Donald had often spoken of them, told her stories of their past mysteries. The green crest of the downs swelled over them; there were little tree-filled ravines and, somewhere beyond, a human community, for she saw the top of a church spire.

A pleasant place. Longhall itself was out of sight behind the chestnuts which marked the southern boundaries of Gillywood Cottage.

She saw the green door open and a man came towards the gate, but did not attempt to open it. He was big, bullet-headed, blue of jowl, a heavy, forbidding man who eyed her unfavourably.

'What you want?'

He spoke awkwardly, like a man speaking in a foreign language.

'I am Miss Gray. I want to see Mr. Goodie—he has the keys of Longhall.'

He glowered at her stupidly. Evidently he found her difficult to follow. Then he shook his head.

'No, Señ—Mister Goodie is not—is in . . .' he paused to rehearse the word and she saw his lips moving. 'Doncast-ro.'

'Doncaster?'

He nodded.

'Si—yes. Doncastro.'

In an odd, uneasy way his face was familiar to her.

'I am the owner of these lands.' She spoke this time in Spanish. 'That is my house.' She pointed towards the chestnuts. 'The Señor Goodie has the keys of the house.'

He blinked at her, but the expressionless face remained blank.

'The patron is away, señorita; he has gone to buy horses in Doncastro. I am the servant of the house; I cannot speak with you.'

He walked back to the house and slammed the door.

She stared angrily at its green-painted surface and went back to the car.

'Who is that man?' Garcia's voice was unusually vigorous. 'Surely I have seen him! Manuel Conceptione! A rascal who was on my *estancia*—did he seem Spanish?'

'He spoke Spanish,' she said. 'I think he's a half-breed . . .'

'Manuel! He disappeared this year. I kicked him off the farm. A thief and worse! Here! Extraordinary.'

She had thought it a remarkable coincidence, but her mind was full of other matters at the moment. She drove the car round to the front of Longhall. The iron gates

were closed but she could see the old house behind its curtain of trees. The place wore an air of neglect, weeds were growing in the gravelled drive and the grass was knee high on what she supposed was the lawn.

'I'm going to Doncaster to get the keys,' she said finally.

She was rather like that; she would have started off to the utmost limits of Europe to get those keys. This glimpse of the home which was hers and had held her ancestors was necessary to fire her determination. She was rich enough to buy any estate in England, young enough for a week or two to make no difference, but too young to wait.

As the car turned back to the main road she heard an exclamation from the old man.

'Look, look!'

Descending the slope of the downs was a string of horses. She counted twelve. They moved in single file and were making for the stables behind Gillywood Cottage.

'Stop, please!'

She pulled up the car by the side of the road, and Garcia scrambled out.

'Beautiful—eh. Not good horses perhaps, but they have the blood! Ah, such loveliness!'

She stood by his side, watching.

'Those are Mr. Goodie's horses, I expect,' she said. 'Why don't you come with me to Doncaster?'

She chatted on until the last horse had disappeared behind a plantation. Still her companion did not move, but stood staring at the trees which hid the walking horses.

'It was a mistake to show you any horses at all,' she

laughed. 'You *must* come to Doncaster.'

Without a word he went back to the car, and all the way to London he hardly spoke a word. Two miles from Gillywood Farm he peered out of the window.

'What place is that?' he asked.

It was a large, comfortable-looking inn, before which a coach was drawn up.

'The Red Lion,' she said humorously. 'Do you want a drink? You'll find there's no good Amontillado in Berkshire.'

He did not reply.

The next morning when she called on him at his hotel to tell him she was leaving for Doncaster, she learned that he had left London for the country the previous night, taking with him a suit-case.

So he passed out of sight and out of life. . . .

Elizabeth never saw him again.

2

Doncaster was full, and had been full since Monday evening. Every room in the few hotels that the town possessed had been booked since mid-summer. An army of visitors had taken possession of such private apartments as were available, and every other house in the Thorn Road area was occupied by strangers to the town. Monday night saw the fair ground crowded with visitors who wandered between the roundabouts and the side-shows. The same crowd filled the market-place on Tuesday morning and gathered in thick groups about the vociferous and eloquent tipsters who offered their wares to their credulous audiences.

It was Leger week in crisp September—the last of the classic races was set for decision; the week of fascinating handicaps. North met South on common ground.

To Elizabeth Gray the town was a bewildering pandemonium. There was a sort of dourness about it and yet there was a charm: stark commerce in ill-fitting gala attire. There was no blending of citizen and visitor, any more than there could be between the great racecourse which she had passed and the gaunt pit gears that stood up upon Doncaster horizon.

By good fortune, she had secured not only a bedroom but the whole of a house for her use. The house had been let to a lordly owner, but he had—said the landlady—

'disappointed'. She welcomed Elizabeth, provided garage for the dusty Rolls and sleeping space for the elderly chauffeur.

Elizabeth was one of the people who thronged the fair ground and in the morning made her way to the sales paddock. She was in her element, for she loved horses and, to her own amusement, found herself bidding for a yearling.

Vainly she searched the hundreds of faces about the sales ring for Mr. Goodie. She would not have known him had she seen him, but instinct might have helped her—she had faith in her instinct.

She herself came in for her share of scrutiny. She was a stranger to the great racing family; and she was more than ordinarily attractive.

When a buyer, in the jargon of the ring, said approvingly that she was 'difficult to fault', he did her no more than justice.

It was natural that she should think of Alberto Garcia—old Garcia who loved horses better than life, and to whom every new foal that came to his *estancia* was dramatically described as the newest gift of the saints.

How he would adore all this, the brisk bidding that rose to thousands of pounds, the constant coming and going in the ring of these yearling thoroughbreds! She sighed. La Massillia was a long way off, and instinct failed her when she tried to distinguish the elusive Elijah.

She felt terribly lonely; she had never felt so lonely in the Argentine and she ached for the sight of a familiar face. Why had the old man gone 'into the country'—perhaps this was 'the country'. She looked round hopefully.

Strolling aimlessly down to the market-place, never

dreaming that relief was so near at hand, she stood for a moment on the outskirts of a crowd which surrounded a grotesque little figure wearing racing colours and a jockey's cap.

'I'm givin' yer the winner of the third race in the card . . . this 'orse has been tried a certainty. This 'orse will be worth a fortune to you. I 'appen to know that it's Trigger's Private Transaction an' when I tell yer that, people, you'll realise you're gettin' for a shillin' what costs the nobility 'undreds of pounds . . .'

'Liar!' murmured a voice in her ear, and she turned quickly.

The brown-faced young man standing at her side was a good head taller than she. His face was long and rather melancholy; he had an air of utter weariness. Nevertheless, into his eyes at times came little ghosts of smiles that lit readily and faded almost reluctantly.

She stared at him unbelievably.

'Yes, it's me,' he said, almost sadly. 'I know just what you're thinking; you're sad, and why shouldn't you be? There are some people you can't get away from. I'm one of 'em.'

'Mr. Luke!' she gasped, and he smiled plaintively.

'I know what you're thinking,' he said sadly. 'You're thinking that on the *Asturia* you couldn't move without falling over my feet. I'm the world's hoodoo.'

'But what on earth are you doing here?' she asked.

She had seen him last on the deck of the liner, leaning over the rail, staring moodily at the crowded quay. And yet he had been the most pleasant of fellow voyagers and the most useful. To meet him in mid-ocean and then to meet him here again in this sea of humanity, seemed almost like fate.

She felt an unaccountable shyness, and remembered, in an odd, inconsequent way, how, the first time they met—it was the day they left Buenos Aires—she had looked upon him as almost elderly. He looked quite young now and the eyes which turned to the noisy tipster were alive with laughter.

‘Liars amuse me,’ he said. ‘Good liars. This feller’s a bad liar—I’m not amused.’

He took her by the arm in a proprietorial way which in any other man would have been offensive, and drew her from the crowd.

‘Does he earn his living that way—by giving tips on horse races?’

He nodded.

‘By his power of invention,’ he said gravely. ‘He’s a novelist. Trigger! Good lord!’

‘Who’s Trigger?’ she asked curiously.

He scrutinised her swiftly before he replied.

‘The king pippin of all the tipsters, the Mussolini of turf prophets. Notice the awe in that fellow’s voice? Trigger’s a phenomenon, and could belong to no other century than this. He’s the ninth wonder of the world. Green Ribbon Trigger. Good Lord!’

He smiled swiftly as though at some secret thought, and then suddenly became grave.

‘What are you doing in this arcadia?’ he asked. ‘Buying yearlings? I knew you were keen on horses, but somehow I didn’t expect to find you at Doncaster.’

She shook her head.

‘I’ve come up to see a man.’ And then, realising the possibilities of their meeting: ‘Do you know him—Mr. Elijah Goodie?’

His face became suddenly a mask. There was no de-

finite movement of muscle that she could detect; only she was conscious of a subtle change.

'Elijah Goodie!' he repeated. 'Li Goodie—the trainer?'

She nodded.

'A friend of yours?'

He had a brusque manner, but she was not offended. The sixteen days of their shipboard acquaintance had accustomed her to what she had at first regarded as impertinence.

'No, he's a tenant of mine,' she smiled.

He nodded quickly.

'Of course he is. Lord, I might have told you about him. I *did* mention Rustem. Goodie is one of the same crowd. There he is!'

He gripped her by the arm and pointed to a man walking towards them on the other side of the road.

He was a yellow-faced man of between forty and fifty. When she met him later she saw that his eyes were big and protruberant and were of the palest blue.

The girl would not have guessed that he was a trainer of racehorses from his garb or his demeanour. His suit was ill-fitting and black. The low, white collar he wore gave him almost a clerical appearance. His movements were slow and laborious. As they watched, he took snuff from a small silver box he carried in his waistcoat pocket, and this was a leisurely process.

'That is Elijah,' said her companion with a certain grim enjoyment. 'Pretty, isn't he?'

If there was one description which did not fit Mr. Goodie it was 'pretty'. She stood watching him until he turned the corner, passing down a side street, apparently to his lodging.

He occupied a small room in a very small house, checked every item on his bill and was regarded even by the most generous of Doncaster landladies as being 'near'.

'Was that Mr. Goodie?' she said.

'You are impressed—other people have been. A cheerful man for a cocktail party, providing the cocktails were so strong that you didn't notice he was there. Wonderful Mr. Goodie!' Then, abruptly: 'Where are you lunching? On the course?'

She had not thought of going to the racecourse.

'If you'll walk down town, I'll fix everything for you,' he said, and although there was no reason in the world why she should walk down town with him, or be in any way dependent upon his help for 'fixing' anything, she accompanied this masterful gentleman.

They went into an imposing building which, she discovered, was the Mansion House. He told her it was one of the few Mansion Houses in England. Leaving her in the hall, he disappeared and came back with a many-coloured ticket and a blue badge.

There was no Members' Enclosure at Doncaster, he explained; the exclusiveness was confined to Stands all of which bore strange and unfamiliar names. There was a County Stand, and a FitzWilliam Stand, and a Nobleman Stand.

'For the time being you're county,' he said as he gave her the blue badge. 'Where's our ancient friend?'

She smiled at his impertinence.

'Mr. Garcia? I don't know. He went into the country last night. I was hoping he would come up with me.' Then, with a sudden realisation of her helplessness: 'Where can I lunch?'

He found a restaurant which was surprisingly empty.

'I don't know Doncaster too well. I only know this restaurant because it was on this historic spot that I found Mr. Sepfield, of whom you've never heard. He was eating a hearty breakfast as though he had never poisoned a wife and buried her under cement.'

He said this so calmly that she stared at him, but he was not joking.

'What are you, then?' she asked breathlessly.

'I'm a detective from New Scotland Yard—if you find yourself fainting, put your head down between your knees; it is undignified but efficacious.'

'A detective!' she gasped.

'A detective inspector. Didn't you notice all sorts of people turning down side-streets to avoid us? If you did, you must not take that as a poor compliment to your own personal attractions. I was the man they didn't want to meet, partly because they don't like me, and partly because I don't like them.'

She looked at him, stupefied.

'You never told me you were a detective, I mean on the ship.'

'No, I didn't tell you because I thought it was unnecessary.'

'Are you here—on duty?' she asked.

He nodded, then looked at her seriously for a long time.

'I'll tell you something that will amuse you,' he said. 'I've never taken any female woman into my confidence and yet I'm taking you. I don't know why. I had a touch of sunstroke when I was in Rio—that may be the explanation. I got all peculiar and wanted to fight the doctor. Yes, I'm on duty; I'm an interested spectator and something more. Did you see Trigger? You wouldn't

know him, but you may have noticed a big yellow Mercedes.'

She had noticed the car; in fact it was impossible that it could have escaped her notice. It had filled the street in its lordly progress, lesser cars had made way for it; coaches had drawn to the kerb; even the buses seemed to shrink aside, ashamed, as it passed.

'That was Trigger. Joseph Phidias Trigger. The J.P. at the beginning of his name will never be at the end.'

'The tipster?' she gasped.

He nodded slowly.

'A prophet—not without honour in his own country. He's a man who is keeping three thousand families in affluence, perhaps more. To be a client of Trigger's is a cachet which will admit you almost anywhere, except the country gaol—you must have a judge's credentials for that. Trigger's clients are hand-picked, microscopically examined, tested for flaws.'

She thought at first he meant that this stout man who had flashed past in the Mercedes controlled some disreputable organisation. Somehow she associated racing with a specialised form of ruffianism, and she was not alone in her illusion. She expressed such a view and Luke chuckled.

'On the contrary: scions of noble houses, colonels in the army and out of the army, owners of country seats, eminent stockbrokers, honest and noble men all of them, and men of wealth and position; there is not one who is not renowned as an upright man *sans peur et sans reproche*.'

'I don't understand.'

She was shocked by the revelation: she half wondered whether he was laughing at her.

‘You’re joking, surely?’

‘No, I am telling you the truth. Do you know what deadly fear lies in the heart of every bluffing and genial bookmaker as he drives to the course today? It is that amongst the hundred and twenty horses that will be running today there will be a Transaction. That’s Greek to you. I’ll explain it.’

She listened entranced while he revealed the *modus operandi* of the Green Ribbon agency.

‘The Green Ribbon is purely poetical. It is the only bit of poetry that Trigger knows. It was invented by an imaginative sporting writer to describe the race track—the green ribbon of the turf. Trigger has a number of clients. Those clients have a number of bookmakers in various parts of the country. To Trigger is sent from each a sheaf of telegraph forms backing a horse for from five to ten pounds. The name of the horse is not on the form. Trigger puts that in himself at the last moment. On the day of the race he despatches an army of commissionaires to the various towns and simultaneously these telegrams are handed across the counter. They usually arrive at the bookmaker’s office after the race is run. It’s perfectly legal, it happens every day. On the course the horse isn’t backed at all, and as the starting price is regulated by the amount of money invested on the course, Trigger’s Transactions usually win at a long price. He’s taken years to choose clients who wouldn’t rob him. They send fifty per cent of their winnings to him, and naturally the temptation is to keep a bit back, but he has weeded out all the bad men. New clients are only accepted on the recommendation of the trusted few. Hand-picked, every one of ’em. Even the commissionaires are hand-picked. He pays them fifteen pounds a

week and a noble percentage.'

'But if the horse isn't backed on the course why should it worry the bookmakers?'

He explained that most of the course bookmakers did an extensive office business.

'At the first hint of a horse being a Transaction his price is cut down.'

Luke told her of one horse that dropped from 20—1 to 5—4 in a few minutes on the strength of such a suggestion.

'But, bless you, it never leaks out. There was a commissionaire once who betrayed his trust, and a horse that should have started at twelve to one became a hot and unbackable favourite on the course. Trigger has an interest in a dozen stables. Before now he's paid thousands of pounds for a horse, kept him a year, entered him in a selling race with his legs heavily bandaged, and the horse has come home by himself at a long price. Naturally, there being no money for him on the course, the people thought that the animal had deteriorated. When I say Trigger entered them, he entered them in somebody else's name; it's always easy to find nominal owners.'

'Does he make a lot of money?'

Luke looked at her with a quizzical smile.

'Are you good at arithmetic?' he bantered. 'Suppose two thousand clients put on an average of ten pounds—it's more than that—suppose a horse wins at ten to one. The net amount is two hundred thousand pounds, a hundred thousand of which goes to Mr. Trigger; and his horse always wins. There was once a race of seven runners at Folkestone. Every one of those seven runners was the property of Trigger. We can't prove it, but we're

pretty sure we're right. He had bought them the moment the entries appeared. He sent a man down to Folkestone to back three of them to make a market.

'A couple of thousand pounds wagered on the course brought those three to a fairly short price. The genuine pea started at very long odds and won in a canter. It was the only horse in the race that was fit to run. The others didn't have a gallop for a week. He's got half a dozen trainers who do as he tells them. He himself owns no horses in his own name. The Jockey Club wouldn't allow it. Any trainer who took a horse of Trigger's would be told that he needn't apply for the renewal of his licence. Now, if you've finished, we'll go up to the course and watch the Transaction materialise.'

'Does it run today?' she asked.

He shook his head.

'Nobody knows. I'm only guessing.'

He had resources which she did not suspect. Before she realised what had happened he had put her into a big car and they were travelling towards the racecourse. By this time she had resigned herself to his guardianship and, possibly because of his profession, felt a little safer in a strange world.

'The car isn't mine,' he explained. 'It belongs to my department. They probably pinched it from a plutocratic cat-burglar.'

She was interested in everything she saw: the endless procession of cars moving slowly towards the Town Moor, the thick stream of pedestrians on either sidewalk. There were coaches in that mile-long procession white with dust, coaches that had come from as far afield as Liverpool and Newcastle, horse vans, expensive automobiles and tiny cars of low horse-power, whose engines

went dead at exasperating moments, and everything that went on wheels and was available.

'There's your friend,' said Luke, and nodded.

She saw an open car and in the back two men. The first she recognised as Goodie. The second, who was a head taller, was a stranger to her.

'Dr. Blanter,' said the detective. 'He once doctored human beings, now he doctors bookmakers—amputates their bank balances and extracts their pocket-books.'

'What is he?' she asked.

'He's what is known as a professional backer. He calls himself that at any rate. That is to say, he backs horses for a living, and would be broke if it wasn't for Trigger. His trouble is mental—he can't stop backing horses, even when he knows nothing about them. And yet he's a rich man.'

The strange profession of Mr. Trigger occupied her mind to the exclusion of everything else.

'But surely the bookmakers wouldn't lose such enormous sums without doing something?' she asked apropos of nothing, though he guessed to what she was referring.

'If it happened every week,' he said, 'they'd go sick, but it doesn't. Trigger never runs more than eight or nine Transactions in a year. This time it's sure to be nine, because the seventh is already advertised. There's generally a month or two between each. He gives the bookies a breathing space. And, besides, most of his clients are incorrigible bettors and probably have a bet every day of their lives; it's very difficult for them—the bookmakers, I mean—to detect when the blow is coming, and more difficult to cut off their clients. By which I mean to refuse to have any further business with them.'

From time to time he glanced at the race card which he had brought in the car.

'I wonder if the Transaction is Ennisby—the horse is in Goodie's stable. He won a race in the North three months ago and took a fortune out of the public pocket. No, not out of the bookmaker's. After all, the bookmaker is merely an agent who passes on to the winner the money he has taken from the loser. The fewer winners he has to pay the bigger his profit.'

He gazed seriously at the massive doctor. He was talking in a deep voice to his companion, who sat with closed eyes; Mr. Goodie might have been asleep or might have been intensively receptive.

'He's an odd-looking fellow. By the way, his friend, Rustem, very seldom comes racing.'

'Is Mr. Rustem ...'

'He's one of the gang,' nodded the other. 'Little Arthur is their legal adviser, and a pretty good one, too. That's why Trigger has never made a false step or, as the dear doctor says, put a foot wrong. The fact that they are at liberty proves that,' he added after thought.

The car crawled round the open spaces before the stands at a painfully slow pace. Luke helped her to alight, pushed a way through the crowd and in a few minutes she was walking across the wide paddock, already crowded with racegoers. A man lifted his hat to the girl and spoke to Luke with that easy friendliness which is part of the racecourse atmosphere.

'What's pulling the trigger today, Mr. Luke?' he asked. 'There's a rumour he's got something hot running. Goodie has one in the second race, but it hasn't arrived. It's a pretty good horse, too. I saw him win at Ripon.'

'It won't be that one,' said Luke.

A few minutes later he was stopped again.

'Have you heard a rumour of the Transaction today?'

The question was asked and answered.

Elizabeth was amazed at the important part this extraordinary tipster played in the daily life of the turf.

That morning had given her a view of an inner world of racing which had nothing to do with stud farms and was far removed from those learned discussions on breeding which she had heard over her uncle's dining-table. The racecourse was a kind of frenzied stock exchange where prices fell and rose and were attached to 'stock' which, a minute or two after it had been bought, might be either valueless or pay magnificent profits.

She strolled into Tattersalls by herself at Luke's suggestion.

'Nobody will hurt you or be rude to you; although you will hear quite a lot of bad language. I hope that it will be unintelligible to you,' he said. 'The safest place in the world for a woman is the racecourse and I'll give you ten pounds for every man you see drunk in Tattersalls!'

It was her first visit to an English racecourse. She had expected to find rows of bookmakers dressed in extravagant checks. She found a few who were noisy, but none who might not have been duplicated from any first-class carriage that carried city men to work. Some looked so aristocratic that she could not believe they were bookmakers at all.

There were very few poorly dressed men in the ring, quite a number of clergymen who, she discovered, were Irish priests.

Luke joined her after a while.

'It's extraordinary!' she said, shaking her head helplessly. 'Who are these people? Where do they come from?'

Luke looked round and nodded towards three men who were talking earnestly to the most aristocratic of the bookmakers.

'Give a guess, and tell me what their professions are.'
She shook her head.

'I don't know. They wouldn't be very rich people, would they?'

'One of them is the head of Frazers Bank. Another is the Earl of Trayce; the third man who is now approaching them, and who looks rather like a duke, is the chief of the Cotton Trust, and is worth five millions. If you get a little closer to him you'll hear him bargaining for thirteen to eight about a six to four chance. If I know Mr. Glowburn he won't get it.'

The race started before she could extract herself from the ring. She heard only the great roar as the horses came to the distance, saw a flicker of silk caps pass above the heads of the people who fringed the rails, and the race was over.

Luke made an excuse and left her, and she saw him going towards Tattersalls' ring. He came back to where he had left her.

'I want to discover the price of this horse. Practically unbacked on the course—a weed from a northern stable who's won at a hundred to six! If that's not a Trigger Transaction I'm a Dutchman!'

He was right. Somewhere in London the name of the horse the astute Mr. Trigger had sent to two thousand clients was known. A frantic effort was made to reach the course in time, telephone and tic-tac men signalled

a warning thirty seconds after the race had started which was thirty seconds too late.

‘That’s that,’ said Mr. Luke, grimly. ‘The date in the advertisement was a fake to put everybody off. Let’s come and see the horse sold.’

He was a washy-looking chestnut, owned and trained by a north country trainer. Consulting his book Luke found that he had only run once and that as a two-year-old.

Bidding at the sale ring rose to twelve hundred guineas before the plater was bought in by the owner.

‘That was one out of the bag,’ said Luke cryptically. ‘The fellow who’s supposed to own him has never had twelve hundred guineas in his life! There’s the owner.’

He pointed to the rotund Mr. Trigger walking complacently across the paddock. He smoked a very long cigar and was as obviously at peace with the world as he was satisfied with himself. Blanter and Goodie were standing by the rails, deep in consultation, and presently Trigger joined them.

‘They advertised this coup for some period following Thursday. The advertisement was quite unnecessary as a bringer-in of new business; they get most of their clients by recommendation—you can’t keep pace with the beggars,’ he added ruefully.

‘You seem to have a personal grievance. Are they doing anything wrong?’ she asked.

He shook his head.

‘The actual tipping of horses and the winning of races is not only right but commendable. No, it’s their method which interests me and the Jockey Club. In this case their conduct is probably unexceptionable. The horse

that won was purchased as a yearling for two thousand guineas, ran once as a two-year-old, and nothing has been seen of him since—he's been laid by for this little ramp, just as other horses have been laid by. Trigger and his gang have learned the real secret of successful racing—which is patience, and patience, and then patience!'

As she looked at the group it disintegrated. Trigger and the doctor walked at a leisurely pace towards Tattersalls; Goodie was left by himself, chewing a half-smoked cigar. He was a picture of gloom and melancholy as he stood with his back to the railings, his eye fixed on the ground.

'I want to meet him—will you introduce me?' she asked.

Luke hesitated.

'Yes, of course. I was wondering whether it would be wise for me to appear in the rôle of friend, but they've probably had me watched ever since I came here, and anyway it will be all to the good that they should know you are in touch with the police.'

He walked with her towards Goodie, who did not look up, even when they stood before him. Yet Elizabeth's rare instinct told her that the man had been watching them from under his lowered lids all the way from the paddock.

'Good afternoon, Mr. Goodie. I want you to meet Miss Elizabeth Gray.'

Goodie looked up slowly, and offered a limp hand. A closer view of him was even less attractive than she had thought. The yellow face was covered with a network of lines; it was like a yellow apple that had been left to shrink and dry. It was difficult to tell his age—he

might have stood as a model of some ancient man who had outlived the oldest of his generation.

There was a peculiar look in his eyes—a sort of resentment, which she thought at first was for her companion, but afterwards found was habitual in him.

‘How d’you do, Miss Gray?’

He spoke slowly; his pale, unwinking eyes seemed to search her mind.

‘I heard you were coming home. You wanted the keys? I’ve telegraphed to Mr. Rustem to send them to you—he’s staying—um—the week at my little place. I’m sorry you’re going to Longhall—um—I am indeed. I’m afraid the place is overrun with—um—rats. It’s difficult to keep them down near a stable, Miss Gray. You’ll find them a great plague.’

He paused, licked his pale lips, never taking his eyes from her.

‘They’re big rats, extraordinarily fierce. One of my stable men was attacked by a drove of them last week.’

She nodded.

‘I like rats,’ she said calmly, and Luke gasped.

Only for a second was Goodie taken aback.

‘You will have a great—um—opportunity of studying them,’ he said.

The butt of the cigar which was in the corner of his mouth was unlighted; he made no effort to remove it when he spoke to her, but rather talked through it; and never once did he move his eyes from hers.

‘My house man told me you had called. I’m sorry I wasn’t at home. Did you see my horses?’

It was so unlike Goodie to indulge in small talk that Luke was surprised. Yet, if he knew the man, not one word of what he was saying was purposeless.

'We caught a glimpse of them returning from the downs,' she said, suspecting nothing as she added: 'I took Mr. Garcia down with me. He's a breeder of race-horses. He was delighted to see an English . . .'

'String,' suggested Mr. Goodie. He nodded slowly. 'Mr. Garcia, a breeder of racehorses . . . I'm glad,' he said. 'I hope you'll get your keys safely, and anything I can do for you, Miss—um—Gray, you may command me. As I say, the rats . . .'

'I'm looking forward to the rats,' she said.

She shook his limp hand at parting. As they walked across the crowded lawn Luke said:

'You really don't like rats, do you?'

'I loathe them,' she said, with her quick smile, 'but I refused to be intimidated. He doesn't want me to take over Longhall and I'm determined to live there.'

He stopped and stared at her.

'You're going to *live* there—in that house near Goodie's?'

She nodded.

'By yourself?'

'Of course—with domestic staff.'

For the first time she resented his interference in her affairs, but it was only a momentary spasm of antagonism and passed instantly.

'Why shouldn't I, Mr. Luke?'

'Because I jolly well say you mustn't!' said Luke emphatically. 'I thought you wanted to see the place out of curiosity, and that you were letting it. I didn't dream you thought of living there. Do you know what Goodie was before he was a trainer of racehorses . . . ?'

Before she could answer they heard a scream behind them; there was a quick movement of the people, and

both turned simultaneously to witness the strangest sight that had ever been seen on a racecourse.

In some manner a dog had gained admission to the paddock: a long, hungry-looking wolfhound.

There was one horse in the ring, walking round with his attendant, and the dog, who had darted across the course through the paddock gates, leaped into the ring behind the horse's heels. The terrified animal lashed out, must have grazed the hound's shoulder. Turning with a snarl, he leaped straight at the horse's throat. In a second the horse went up on his hind legs, beating ineffectively with his hooves, screaming with terror. Then into the ring sprang a man—Goodie. In two strides he had reached them and, gripping the great dog with one hand and the horse's bridle with the other, with a quick jerk of his wrist he flung the hound into the middle of the ring and the dog lay there motionless. The horse, his shoulder streaked with blood, backed away, screaming and kicking, but Goodie had him firmly by the bridle, and in a few seconds was joined by the trainer of the horse. As for the dog, it did not move.

'Dead,' said Luke laconically. 'Goodie broke his neck! That old fellow's got the strength of an ox.'

Elizabeth stared at this unimposing man as he stooped under the rail of the ring and pushed his way through the throng.

'How amazingly brave!' she said, awestricken.

'That's his job,' said Luke. 'Before he was a trainer of racehorses he trained wild beasts—went into the cage with lions; eventually owned his own travelling menagerie. That's why you're not going to Longhall.'

This time she was really annoyed.

'You're proprietorial, Mr. Luke,' she said, shortly.

'That's my weakness,' he said. 'Come on the stand, if you haven't had enough excitement for one day.'

She had made up her mind to leave Doncaster on the following morning, and it was hardly worth while quarrelling with the man who had been very good to her and who perhaps she would not meet again.

They climbed the interminable stairs in silence, and joined the company at the top of the stand. From here she enjoyed an uninterrupted view of the racecourse. He pointed out the various landmarks, but she was more fascinated with the dense, moving throngs that packed the enclosures.

The second race was signalled and the horses were going down one by one to the post, when she climbed up to the highest tier of the stand. Over the wall she looked down into the street below and, as she glanced idly to the left, she saw a big car swing round from the London road and come to a halt before the stand entrance. A man got out; it was Arthur Rustem. She went back to Luke and told him what she had seen.

'Rustem here? He doesn't usually go racing.'

He put up his glasses and searched the paddock, and as he did so he saw Rustem threading his way through the people. The three men he sought were in the farthest corner of the paddock. Dr. Blanter, the stout little Trigger and Goodie. He saw the trainer turn to meet the approaching figure of the lawyer, and the little group closed in, head to head. It must have been something vastly important that Rustem had come to communicate, for through his glasses he saw Dr. Blanter's face distorted with anger.

Trigger, who was the scout of the party, looked round every few seconds, as though in search of possible eaves-

droppers. When a group of racegoers came near them they moved a little farther along and continued their discussion. Once Luke saw the trainer pointing up towards the stand.

'I've got a hunch they're speaking about us,' he said. 'Do you see them?'

She nodded.

'I wonder if he's brought my keys?' she asked innocently as she put her glasses down.

'Your keys! Can you see Rustem coming up to Yorkshire...'

He broke off. Three of the men were coming rapidly across the paddock and presently passed out of sight. Running to the top of the stand, Luke looked over the wall. The big, dust-covered car still stood at the entrance. The three came out and got into the car which, with a roar of engine, swung round and went back the way it had come.

'Going back to London. I wonder why?' said Luke thoughtfully. 'I wonder why the hurry?'

Luke was evidently perturbed and worried, and she could only wonder what exactly was his mission at Doncaster. It was very unlikely that Scotland Yard, which is never over-staffed, would detach an important officer to watch the operations of Trigger's Transactions.

'They may come back tomorrow. Probably something went wrong with the Transaction. It's important, whatever it is.'

He drove her to her house before the last race, and when he offered to take her out to dinner and show her round the fair ground, she could find no excuse for refusing.

The girl had some pleasant work to do that evening:

she had brought big furniture catalogues from London, carpet and curtain designs, and spent an hour in the most delightful occupation a woman can devise—planning the furnishing of her house.

Elizabeth Gray had been a shorthand-typist at the age of seventeen, when her mother died. She knew she had an uncle somewhere in South America but he had had no definite existence for her until that surprising cable of his came, asking her to join him. For six delightful years she had lived the life of her dreams, in the saddle every day, the mistress of a luxurious house; and on the death of her uncle, became his sole heiress. She was a rich woman now and could afford to redesign her life.

Longhall she had visited as a child, and retained not too pleasant memories of its sombre magnificence. And now it was hers—that beautiful old Tudor house and its thousands of acres. It had been old Donald's wish that she should return to England on his death, and in a sense it was an easy request to fulfil, for she had very few friends in South America. Her uncle had lived an insular life, and the girl had seldom come into Buenos Aires except for periodical visits to her dressmaker or the theatre.

Mr. Garcia was almost her only friend, and it brought no great pang to cut herself adrift from that life she had lived on the *estancia*. In England were several old friends who might be picked up, acquaintanceships which might ripen into friendships, interests which her wealth could command.

When she was dining with Luke that night, she told him her plans.

'You're going to own racehorses, are you? Well, you might do worse—if you can afford it. I won't risk the

snub which would come my way if I asked you how much money you've got. Besides I happen to know it is a quarter of a million, and that you've got thirteen thousand a year to play with, and possibly a great deal more in a few years' time. But you're not going to live at Long-hall.'

'Why?' she asked defiantly.

'Because I don't want you to,' he said. 'It may seem rather an inadequate reason, but it is all I can give for the moment, because my real objection rests on a theory which has not been proved—at least, not to anybody's satisfaction but my own. You went there, did you? Did you see the bars on the windows and the iron gates and the mesh-net fencing? And do you know why the new stables that Goodie bought are unoccupied, and why he had to build another lot half a mile from the house, on the slope of the downs? And have you seen Perrywig Cave? That's on the property he rented from you. It has two iron gates, and is popularly supposed to be haunted by the ghost of a lady who was murdered there about twenty years ago.'

His look was a challenge, but his eyes did not waver, nor did he smile.

'I'm serious—the villagers thereabouts will tell you that on certain evenings the screams of that unfortunate lady curdle their blood. Wonderful expression that, "curdle their blood". One of those perfect illustrations which could only be thought up by simple and pastoral people.'

He paused.

'Well?' she asked, the challenge more definite. 'Have you heard the screams of the "unfortunate lady"?''

'I have heard them,' he said simply, 'and it wasn't pleasant.'

She began to laugh, quietly at first, and then her merri-ment overcame her and she laughed aloud.

'Ghosts!' she said scornfully. 'Rats!' and added hastily: 'I am not being rude, I am merely referring to the little brown ghosts that are supposed to haunt Longhall. I don't believe in them and I don't believe in your ghost either. Is that why you don't want me to go down?'

Luke spread butter on a piece of toast with great deliberation.

'Partly,' he said.

'Well, I'm going.' She hit the table with her fist. 'I don't believe in ghosts or rats or anything. I'm going to live in Longhall because my grandfather, and his father, and generations of Galliwoods lived there—I don't know how they've come to turn it into Gillywood.'

He looked at her for a long time without speaking.

'In that case you'd better let me come along and search the place for you before you take over,' he said. 'I'm a great hunter of rats, human and rodent. And I'd like you to let me give you some advice about staff.'

Her mouth opened in surprise at this surprising suggestion.

'You ought to have a butler and a footman and a handyman, whatever women you have about the place. I'm very serious. It's a terribly lonely situation, and men-servants have got to be carefully chosen. Just now there's a plague of criminals wandering around England with false credentials.'

'Why should you do this?' she asked.

'I get a commission on their salaries,' he said flip-pantly.

3

The next morning Luke called while she was in the middle of breakfast; and he accepted her invitation to join her although he admitted calmly that he had already had a very hearty meal.

‘Are you going racing today?’ he asked.

It was her intention to return to London that morning, she said, and he considered her answer as though it were of the utmost importance.

‘What will you do when you get back to London?’

She had no very definite ideas for her immediate plans. The world was a flower garden which offered many choice blooms for the picking.

‘I want you to promise me something. Don’t go to Longhall alone.’

Her lips twitched.

‘I’m not being funny or melodramatic,’ he said earnestly; ‘I’m merely asking you as a friend. I want you to do something as a great favour to me. Will you ring me up at Scotland Yard—I shall be in London tomorrow myself—and when you go down to view this property, let me go with you?’

‘Am I under police protection?’ she smiled.

In a sense, he said, he thought she was.

‘I don’t know that you’re in any particular danger or need protection, but I’d like to bring a man down to vet

the place. He's an authority on certain things, and together we might be of some help to you. As for going back to London . . .' he shook his head. 'If you're advised by me you'll see the Leger. It's one of the greatest races of the year, and you know enough about the course now to get along without my assistance. I'll see that you have a reserved carriage to London, and possibly I'll come back with you.'

She was amused.

'You might at least ask if I want you to come back with me, but I'm beginning to realise that you're not terribly conventional. All right, I'll see the race. It will be something to tell Mr. Garcia.'

That afternoon she looked upon the greatest throng she had ever seen assembled. It was a fine day, and all England was represented in the overfilled public enclosures, and Yorkshire itself lined the rails ten deep. She detected something electric in the atmosphere she had missed on the previous day, and saw history made in a thrilling finish when a 50—1 chance squeezed home by a short head. The view was perfect from the top of the stands. Luke could not get up in time, but had a good view of the race, he told her, from the sloping lawn.

He was moving towards the stands to meet the girl when someone touched his arm, and he turned to meet the ingratiating smile of a little man who looked like a jockey run to seed. He was not over clean; the shabbiness of his attire certainly did not advertise his wealth.

'You remember me, Mr. Luke—Punch Markham?'

Luke knew Punch very well. The man had had the misfortune to pass under his official review and had been sentenced to three months in prison for obtaining money by false pretences.

'I'm going straight now, Mr. Luke. It's not a paying game, going straight. I come up from London stowed away on a coach. That'll give you a laugh! Got under the driver's seat. It wasn't half hot—it was right over the engine. That's a new one on you, Mr. Luke, stowing away on a coach! An old owner of mine gave me a free ticket on the course for old time's sake. They ain't forgot I had one of the best little horses in the country under my charge. Haven't seen anything of old Goodie, have you? I've been looking for him all over the place, trying to touch him for a quid—and I'm entitled to it, too.'

'Why are you entitled to anything from that eminent trainer?' asked Luke, not averse to the least scrap of information about Elijah Goodie.

'Eminent trainer,' said the little man scornfully. 'I could train his head off. Lions and tigers, yes, but horses—no. Though I admit he's done wonders with that foal I sold him—the Blandford foal, Mr. Luke; you know it? Won a race at Stockton the other day.'

'Field of Glory?' said Luke, and the little man nodded.

'That's him. I'll bet they won a packet on him. It wasn't in Goodie's stable, but Goodie's got him now. You never know who owns horses in that crowd. I sold him for sixty-five guineas. He was bred by a farmer in Ireland . . .'

'Don't give me his history, Punch; I'm in a hurry.'

'He's the only horse I know that had odd feet—three big 'uns and one little 'un. That's why the farmer sold him—said he was a freak. Goodie never found it out. I plastered his hoof round with cobbler's wax—it's a fact, Mr. Luke. The games I've got up to. . . .'

'None of your villainous reminiscences.'

He put his hand in his pocket and took out a ten-shilling note.

'I'm throwing this in the gutter, Punch. This only means the difference between drunk and sober.'

'I'll swear I never drink nowadays. Can't afford it. It's as much as I can do to get enough to eat,' said Punch, his grimy paw closing on the note. 'You've been good to me, Mr. Luke. I always say that coppers aren't as black as they're painted, and busies are generally white when you get down to their better nature.'

Luke did not stop to listen to the encomia. He had seen the girl come through the narrow passageway leading from the paddock, and joined her.

'A wonderful race,' he said. 'It would have done Trigger's heart good to have had that fellow on the wire—fifty to one. He'd have had the Green Ribbon office painted red. And now, young lady, I'm ready. There's a good train coming down from Leeds: it stops at Doncaster, and I've reserved a compartment.'

'Who was that little man you were speaking to?' she asked.

She had reached the stage of friendship with him when she could gratify her curiosity without apology. On the way to the station he told her Punch Markham's history. He had been a good jockey and a successful trainer, but had had too many friends. One day the stewards had evinced an interest in the running of one of his horses. Punch had duly appeared before the august Stewards of the Jockey Club and had had his licence withdrawn; he was lucky to escape being warned off. He made a living by buying and selling horses; was one of the most famous horse doctors in England, and it was generally believed that he had something to do with one or two

big turf swindles, though in these he probably played a minor part. He was not greatly trusted, even by the people who employed him.

‘You get quite a lot of people of that kind connected with the turf, but against those you’ve got to set the thousands of decent men and women who would never dream of breaking even a bye-law of the turf. You never hear about those, but they are the backbone of the game. You’re bound to have wrong ’uns who live on racing. Money is pretty easy for the rogue to get.’

On the journey back to London, Elizabeth had an opportunity of studying the man who had erupted into her life so violently and unexpectedly. He was not like any police officer she had imagined. She who, in the days when she was a stenographer, had met many types, and rather prided herself upon her ability to place even the most obscure, was a little baffled by this man. He sat in a corner of the carriage, his eyes closed, and she scrutinised him cold-bloodedly. He was not very good-looking, though she admitted to herself that he was attractive. In repose his face was sad; his mouth drooped; his long, thin nose seemed to grow longer. He had good eyes and, except for the touch of grey at his temples, looked youthful. He was not her idea of a police officer at all.

In the course of the journey he mentioned casually that he spoke Spanish and, thinking he was bluffing, she asked him a question in that language, to be instantly answered in faultless Castilian. Languages, he confessed, came easily to him, and he spoke three or four.

‘Not so many as brother Rustem—he’s strong on the Oriental side. Greek and Arabic are his mother tongues

—came from somewhere in Macedonia originally. He's not your lawyer any more, of course.'

'Why of course?'

'Because he's been struck off the Rolls. Didn't you know?'

'You told me on the ship.'

He nodded.

'So I did! I knew I'd done somebody a shot in the eye, but I thought it was Goodie. I wasn't aware you knew Goodie. Don't trust Rustem. And . . .' He hesitated.

'What?' she asked.

'Well . . .' It was the first sign of diffidence he had shown. 'He's rather a lady-killer.'

He found himself on slippery ground and floundered in his effort to make a recovery.

'I'm not suggesting that he'll—er . . .'

'Make love to me? Why shouldn't he? Really, Mr. Luke, you're a little too protective!'

He grinned sheepishly at this, even had the good grace to change colour in his embarrassment, to her intense amusement. She could forgive him.

He left her at King's Cross Station, but not until she had promised to notify him when she made her visit to Longhall. When she reached the hotel she found a long telegram awaiting her; it had been handed in at South-west Munich.

'Will you please pay my bill and send my bags to Friedmanns Agency, Friedrichswilhelmstrasse 719, Munich. Am going Bavaria for short holiday. My beautiful Vendina is well and remembers me. Adios. Alberto.'

Mr. Garcia had a playful habit of signing himself by his Christian name.

So he had gone to Munich, after all! That was a little load off her mind.

Now that old Mr. Garcia had gone, she was spending her first night alone in London, and it was rather a boring experience. She bought a seat for a theatre, and would have been glad to have had the moral courage to come out half-way through the performance.

It was wonderful, being rich in a city where she had suffered privations. Yet, as she drove back to the hotel, she looked at the girls climbing on to the buses with something like envy; tomorrow would see them flowing in endless streams across the bridges on their way to innumerable offices. But tonight they had homes to go to, and people to look after them, and families who were interested in their movements and plans.

She went to bed that night feeling vaguely dissatisfied, and strangely missing the curious companionship of Doncaster.

She felt better in the morning, breakfasted in her sitting-room, and was debating on which furniture store she should make a start, when the desk clerk telephoned.

‘Mr. Arthur Rustem? Show him up, please.’

Mr. Rustem came smiling and bowing into the room.

‘You were at Doncaster. Don’t deny it, my dear young lady, I saw you.’ He waved his finger waggishly, was not only friendly, but dear-friendly.

‘You have very good eyesight, Mr. Rustem,’ she said coldly. ‘I saw you—through my glasses. I rather doubt whether you could have picked me out from the thousands of people who were on the top of the stands.’

He changed the subject discreetly.

‘Anyway, I knew you were at Doncaster. I saw our dear friend, Mr. Goodie. A good, hard-working man, who is just struggling into prosperity, and happily has made a little more money recently. I say “happily”, because I like to see a good man get on.’

‘Have you brought the keys, Mr. Rustem?’

She was not inclined to discuss the worldly prospects of Mr. Elijah Goodie.

‘Certainly.’

He pulled up a chair, unbidden, and sat down; took from his pocket a flat box and laid it on the table.

‘Here are the keys of the ancestral home,’ he said, almost gaily. ‘The question is, my dear young lady, whether you prefer living in that damp and lonely house—I don’t know any house more isolated—to accepting the very handsome offer which, by a curious coincidence, I received this morning from a client of mine, who wishes to buy the property for’—he paused impressively—‘forty thousand pounds! I think he’s a little mad to offer such a sum . . .’

‘Who is your client?’ she interrupted. ‘Mr. Goodie or Mr. Trigger? Or is it Dr. Blanter?’

Rustem blinked at her, quite unprepared for this sudden attack. Then he shook his head sadly.

‘I’m afraid, Miss Gray, that you have been listening to mischievous gossip. I’m not going to mention any names, but there are certain disappointed people, if I may use the expression certain revengeful people, who have had their knuckles rapped owing to misrepresentations . . .’

‘Is this a round-about way of describing Inspector Luke?’ she asked.

‘No, no,’ he answered hastily; ‘I’ve nothing whatever to say against Inspector Luke, a most intelligent man

and quite a charming and an educated man. I wouldn't like it to go forth that I had said anything derogatory to Mr. Luke. But there are mischievous people . . .'

'I'm not selling Longhall, Mr. Rustem,' she said quietly. 'I think it will save a great deal of discussion if I make that clear.'

'You're being offered exactly twice its value.'

'If I am offered four times its value it makes no difference. I am going to occupy Longhall, and at the expiration of the lease I shall probably take over Gillywood Cottage and the downlands.'

He sat staring at her, drumming his white fingers on the table, and then he forced a smile.

'If you are determined, it would be stupid of me to offer you any further advice,' he said. 'Possibly you're right. I have a great faith in woman's instinct. So far as I can I will make things easy. I'll go with you when you pay the house a visit, and give you every assistance I can.'

'It isn't at all necessary for you to come. I've already arranged for an escort,' she said. There was a certain quiet malice in her smile. 'Mr. Luke, who knows the neighbourhood very well, has promised to show me round. Are those the keys?'

She took the little box and opened it and he watched her curiously. She certainly was lovely, and he admired her spirit; but at the same time he had a very pressing duty to fulfil.

'I'm very glad you raised the question of the lease, Miss Gray. I handed all the documents to your lawyer, and he pointed out to me that Mr. Goodie's lease expires at the end of this year, and not, as I thought, in a few years' time. That is to say, you can exercise your option

of determining the lease at the end of the year; otherwise it goes on for the full term of fifteen years. I'm afraid I gave Goodie my personal assurance that he wouldn't be turned out, and that you would be the last person in the world to wish to ruin a man who is past middle age—one might almost say, in the evening of his life. And, knowing this—he fished in his inside pocket, drew out a folded paper and put it on the table before her—'I've drawn up a provisional extension, which will give him a year or so to look round for another place in the event of your deciding to evict him. It's a mere formality.' He unscrewed a fountain-pen and pushed the paper towards her. 'You'll see I have written in pencil where you sign.'

He heard her laugh and looked up.

'Really, Mr. Rustem!' she said reproachfully. 'You don't expect me to sign all sorts of odd papers that are sprung on me at a minute's notice? Or do heiresses do that kind of thing in the blessed innocence of their hearts?' She shook her head. 'Send it to my lawyer.'

He was pained, folded up the paper with great deliberation and dignity, and replaced it in his pocket, screwed on the top of his fountain-pen, and, rising, took up his hat and gloves.

'You rather hurt me.' There was a suggestion of tremor in his voice. 'In all my professional career it has never been suggested that I have tried to take advantage of a client's innocence...'

'In fact Mr. Rustem,' she said, her eyes bright with laughter, 'the only suggestion that has ever been made against you is that you employed your clients' money for your own personal enterprises.'

Then it was war, he saw, as he faced her. Somehow

he had never expected any other end, though her flippancy had come in the nature of a shock. Perhaps because he did not know that she had battled with life for three hard years before the miracle happened and a glimpse of an old letter had reminded Donald Gray that he had one relative in the world and that he was feeling very old and lonely.

Arthur Rustem saw only a very beautiful and very rich young lady, who was embarrassingly self-reliant. She was not at all like the gentle heroine of his dreams, for Mr. Rustem indulged himself in romantic fancies.

‘Very good, my young friend.’ All the gentleness had gone out of his voice. ‘I see you’ve been hopelessly prejudiced against me and against my—clients. It’s a great pity. I’ve advised you not to go to Longhall . . .’

‘I’ve already advised that, but for quite a different reason.’

It was very like Luke to come in without the formality of knocking at the door; typical that he should be in the room, the door closed behind him, and half-way to the table, and that neither of the occupants should have heard his entrance.

The girl looked round, startled.

‘I offered the same advice to Miss Gray,’ said Luke again; ‘but she seems to be set on it, and I suppose she’ll live there in peace with her neighbours, her late lawyers, and the Triggers and Blanters of life. If I have anything to do with it, it’s a cinch. I’m going to do a lot to make Miss Gray comfortable at Longhall.’

He was looking at, and speaking to, Rustem with drawling deliberation.

‘It may mean that I shall have to shift a lot of people to where the dogs won’t bite them—quite high-up

people, Rustem, who think they are so safe that they wouldn't take an insurance at decimal one per cent.'

He saw Rustem change colour; the threat had gone home; and she imagined that, behind that smile of his, he was in a white heat of rage.

He stalked to the door without a word, and it was characteristic of him that he closed it very gently after him. Elizabeth broke the silence.

'Do you ever knock at the door when you come into a lady's room?' she asked.

In his exasperating way he ignored the question.

'What did he want, besides bringing the keys? He got them this morning, by the way, from Goodie, who brought them up himself.'

'He wanted me to sell the estate.'

He nodded.

'Did he offer much?' and, when she told him, he whistled. 'They're pretty keen—I wonder why? The downs are not the best in Berkshire, although they enjoy a certain amount of privacy, which a trainer doesn't get at places like Wantage.'

He scratched his ear thoughtfully.

'Have you heard from Mr. Garcia?'

She showed him the telegram, and he handed it back to her without a word.

'There's something in the wind and I don't quite know what it is. Mr. Green Ribbon Trigger has sent out a special circular to all his clients, asking them to utilise the next month in opening new accounts. Thorough! That fellow's got every government department skinned to death!' He took from his pocket a sheaf of papers and extracted two.

'Here's the hurry-up call. Every client is asked to

double the number of his bookmakers. And here's a supplementary and confidential list, showing the financial position of every big bookmaker in England and the best method of approach. Here are a few hints on opening accounts under family names—which are nothing but fictitious names. Trigger, as I remarked before, has brains. They're going for something colossal. Trigger is probably working two or three hundred accounts himself for this special coup.'

He whistled softly to himself, his eyes fixed on the girl, his mind obviously many miles away.

'They'll offer you seventy thousand before they've finished,' he said—a true prophecy, for he had not been gone ten minutes when the phone rang and Rustem's voice spoke from the other end of the wire.

'Are you alone, or is our annoying friend still there? By the way, my client has increased his offer. He's an antiquarian with a taste for Tudor buildings. He's willing to pay a colossal figure—seventy or eighty thousand pounds...'

'Longhall is not for sale,' she said, and replaced the receiver.

There were certain peculiar features about the present situation. Luke sat in his room and turned them over in his mind. Three months before, as he knew, Goodie had complained to the local authorities of the water shortage, and had begun negotiations for the purchase of a training establishment in Wiltshire. He had found touts on his training ground, and was anxious to hire or buy the Wiltshire property because of the freedom he would enjoy in this respect.

Why, then, had Gillywood Farm and the overlooked

downs become so precious to him that he was willing to pay up to eighty thousand pounds? Was it the possibility of having Elizabeth as a neighbour? Had Longhall a special mystery of its own? Or did this training establishment of his hold a secret which he feared she would surprise?

The most obvious of the secrets was no mystery to Inspector Luke. He had made investigations at close quarters and had made a discovery and, in its making, had had the shock of his life. He was a pretty brave man, but he would not have attempted to force Li Goodie's house by night. He knew the secret of the abandoned stables, why they had been rebuilt at such a distance from the cottage. Need the girl know? That was a problem he had not settled to his own satisfaction.

At any rate, it could wait until after he had made a personal inspection of Longhall and seen for himself all the possibilities for trouble. That there would be trouble was inevitable. He wished to reduce any danger to the girl to a minimum.

Though nominally his headquarters were at Scotland Yard, his office was in a block of offices a stone's throw from that institution. He had a small staff of his own; a record department which was distinct from the headquarters. He had been lent to the racing authorities for three years, and had been pursuing inquiries which led him into strange and fascinating byways.

He, who thought that the underworld had nothing new to show him, learned of grafts beyond the ken of the average Yard man. In his secret records were the names of innocent little stable boys, of austere, eminent men, of tiny and fairly innocuous confederacies, of other larger and more dangerous gangs, who preyed not upon the

public but upon bookmakers. In his lists were the names of not a few policemen.

He did not deal with the recognised criminals who visited racecourses as they visited fashionable weddings. They were the incidentals, birds of passage who did not belong to racing, but came and went, and he left their care to that picked body of police which frequents all racing assemblies, looking for familiar faces.

In his card indexes were the names of every known employee of the Green Ribbon. The commissionaires, the clerks, the very charwomen who cleaned the offices in the morning were tabulated, and his agents had sounded most of them. They, however, were the mere hands and feet of the organisation; the brains were represented by the fat little man who sat in a room panelled in rose-wood, behind him a big steel bank safe let into the wall and protected by doors of six-inch steel.

The clerks did not even know the names of subscribers. Trigger employed nothing but girls; paid them each a salary which would make the average secretary's mouth water; chose them with greater care than the candidates for the Civil Service are chosen.

Each girl had her desk and her card index, but every card bore, not a name, but a number. That number was stencilled on every envelope that was sealed, before the sealed envelopes were taken to Trigger's office.

It was he who produced, from long, steel trays in his safe, the stencil plates bearing the corresponding number; it was he who fitted them into the addressing machine; and it was he alone who worked that machine. He posted the letters himself, carrying huge batches of them in a car from post office to post office, dropping a few in every pillar-box he passed. The operation usually meant

three hours' driving, but it was one of the things he had to do himself.

His clients were, as Luke said, hand-picked and tested. Half their winnings came to him the week after a horse had won, in linen-backed envelopes, green of hue, and registered. Every client had a supply of those envelopes, and all such letters came to his private office their contents being checked by him and noted in his private index. Before and after a coup he would work eighteen hours a day, sometimes sleeping in the office. All the money came in cash, and what happened to it Luke had never discovered. Large sums were paid into Mr. Trigger's banking account, and this was necessary because his running expenses were extraordinarily heavy.

It was certain that the accounts he kept for the purpose of Inland Revenue were faked. The real amount of his profits was never discovered. When a coup was projected it was Mr. Trigger who stamped the name of the horse on every telegram, put the telegrams, twenty or thirty of them, in sealed envelopes ready for the morning of the race. These envelopes were carried to all parts of the country by his commissionaires; the seals were broken at a post office, sometimes in the presence of a second commissionaire, unknown to the first, and the telegrams passed across the counter. The second batch of helpers were called inspectors. They had their headquarters in another office in London, and never met the uniformed men of the Green Ribbon until they met them at the post office.

Luke suspected the presence on every racecourse of a small gang of watchers, whose business it was to read the messages of the tic-tac men who signalled from a distant telephone the news which passed daily between

London and every racecourse.

The fat little man was a general, a corps commander. He left nothing to chance, and left nothing important to his subordinates.

In the course of the next few days Luke met the girl twice, each time by accident. Although she had not seen the house, she was already choosing furniture; more, he suspected, as a gesture of her determination to take up residence at Longhall than for any other reason. Then one morning he had a phone call from her, telling him that she was going down to see the property. She picked him up in her car and they headed for Berkshire.

‘I thought you were bringing a friend?’ she said.

He nodded.

‘I’ve telephoned to him to be there waiting for us,’ he said. ‘He lives at Reading, which makes it simple.’

‘Another detective?’ she asked, and he hesitated.

‘In a sense, yes.’

She had heard from Garcia again: a telegram from Munich, inviting her to join him in a ‘long tour of this delightful Europe’.

‘The old gentleman is going gay,’ said Luke flippantly. ‘You haven’t seen Rustem?’

She shook her head.

‘Nor any of his pals?’

‘I saw Doctor Blanter; he’s been lunching in my hotel, and he seemed particularly interested in me.’

‘You bet he is. That’s the only bad man of the party.’ Luke was very serious. ‘He’s had more escapes of being struck off the medical register than Rustem had of being struck off the Rolls; only Rustem was unlucky. All greedy people are unlucky. Blanter was a doctor—is a doctor still. He was mixed up in one or two affairs and

found it convenient to sell his practice. He's a brilliant toxicologist—knows more about poisons than any man in England, and when he isn't racing he spends his time in his laboratory—he's got a beauty on the river near Maidenhead—a palace of a place; with rosaries and boathouses and statues of Venus and all the comforts of home.'

She laughed gently at this. If the truth be told, she had missed his companionship, and was annoyed that even a hint of indispensability should attach to any of her friends. And he amused her. So few people are consistently amusing without also being a little boring.

'You've been buying furniture?' he accused her.

She admitted she had.

'Only old oak, and not a great deal of it,' she said. 'I'm determined to live at Longhall, and now I must, if it's only to put my furniture there. And I've three excellent domestics. I shall be seeing them today. Isn't it odd how news spreads? I don't suppose I've told more than two people that I'm opening my house in the country, and I've had half a dozen staff to see me. I've a splendid housekeeper, a cook and two very pretty maids who haven't the least objection to living in the country. I've told them to be there today to see the place and to give the housekeeper a chance of learning her work.'

'Marvellous!' said the other. 'As an organiser you've got Trigger beaten to a frazzle.'

They passed slowly through the village, beyond which lay Gillywood Farm, and they glanced at the forbidding entrance of Mr. Goodie's establishment.

'Like a prison, isn't it?'

'It's very sinister,' she agreed.

The iron gates of Longhall were open. They passed

up a weedy drive, and when they came into view of the house the car stopped at her signal. There was a group of people about the door—four women, and, at some distance, a gaunt-looking man.

‘The two pretty ones, I presume, are the maids; the elderly ladies are the housekeeper and the cook,’ said Luke. ‘All dressed in black. You’d think they’d lost a job instead of finding one.’

As he walked with her towards the waiting women, Elizabeth felt that her companion, rather than herself, was the chief subject of their curiosity, for they scrutinised him with an interest which would not have been excessive had he been a member of the royal family about to dedicate Longhall to the service of its owner.

He strolled across to the gaunt man, and, exchanging a few words, brought him back to Elizabeth.

‘This is Mr. Lane. If you don’t mind, I’d like him to go around with us. You’d better keep your staff outside until we’ve seen the house—anyway, I don’t think you’ll find they’re particularly anxious to go in ahead.’

‘Do you expect a bomb to explode or something?’ she asked scornfully.

‘I expect to see rats,’ was the calm answer.

She shivered; she had forgotten about the rats, believed them to be the figment of Mr. Goodie’s imagination. But she was to be disagreeably surprised.

Luke turned the key of the door and swung it open.

‘If you don’t mind, Mr. Lane and I will go first,’ he said.

He took one step across the threshold and stopped. She noticed that, as he did so, the four women stepped back apprehensively. She heard the rustling of tiny feet, saw two terrified little figures fly up the broad stairway,

saw three or four more make a dart for the fireplace and, failing to find an exit, fly across the room to the open door. Elizabeth went pale; she hated rats, and there were rats in plenty here.

Luke turned with a grin to his companion.

'All right, Lane, bring 'em in.'

The gaunt man went out of the house and came back in a few moments with three little terriers, leashed together. In the meantime Luke had walked through to the back and opened every door and window.

'You wait here. I'm going to de-rat the house.'

Elizabeth, standing outside the doorway, heard the excited yelping of the terriers and the scamper of their feet on the bare boards. In half an hour Luke came down.

'Come in,' he said. 'I think most of them are gone.'

'They're still in the house, though,' she said fearfully.

'There may be one or two, but I shouldn't think so. They were turned loose in the house this morning for your particular benefit. I should imagine Goodie has been searching Berkshire for weeks to make a show. Lane is an experienced rat-catcher: that's why I brought him down. He'll stay in the house for two or three days and make absolutely sure that the beasts don't belong to the place. He says they're all foreigners—quite a number of field rats among them.'

As she passed from room to room there was grisly evidence of the terriers' activities, and when she came to what she instantly decided would be her own bedroom she found the rat-catcher leashing up his dogs again.

'I'll make a thorough examination of the house, Miss Gray,' he said, 'but I don't think I shall find many nests.'

This isn't the kind of place they'd live in, anyway. There's nothing for them to eat—they'll be up at the stables if they're anywhere.'

It was with some difficulty that Elizabeth persuaded the four women to come into the house. The two younger girls flatly refused. Luke, an interested and amused audience of the little discussion which followed, beckoned the new housekeeper.

'Who told you there were rats in this house?' he asked.

The woman looked at him uneasily.

'It looked like a house where there might be rats, sir,' she said.

'Who told you?' he asked again. 'Who told all you people that the house would be full of rats and that you'd better keep outside?'

'Nobody.'

It was the new cook who spoke, a husky-voiced woman.

'What's your name?' Luke challenged the housekeeper.

'Linton, sir.'

'Linton, eh? It used to be Carr, didn't it? And what do you call yourself?' He addressed the cook.

'Mrs. Kohler.'

'It used to be Klien. I suppose one name's as good as another. You other girls I've only two records against, one for shoplifting—that's you'—he pointed to the prettier one—'and you, I think, were mixed up in the Hallam Street affair, weren't you?'

The pallid girl, incapable of words, nodded. Elizabeth was speechless with amazement.

'Now you can all go home,' said Luke gently; 'pay your own fares, and don't bother Miss Gray again, or I

shall be coming after you to find out where you got all those wonderful references you brought this young lady. You can tell the gentleman who sent you—I think it was Mr. Rustem, every one of you called at his office before you went to interview Miss Gray—that he needn't trouble to send the other four or five he's interviewed. One of my officers has checked them up. Good morning.'

They moved like four black sheep towards the gates.

'But why—who are they?' stammered Elizabeth. 'Why did you ...'

'They were specially chosen for you—a stupid move on the part of Rustem, because they'd have all been scared stiff at the first sound of the bogey—all except Mrs. Klein, who is probably due for the scaffold one of these bright days.'

'But how did you know about them? You haven't been watching me?'

'Only by proxy,' he said airily. 'One has to keep an eye on one's friends. London is a very risky place. But really I knew all about these girls from the observation I've kept on Rustem. Now what are you going to do, young lady? Are you determined to come down to this ancient ruin, or are you going to be a sensible girl and buy a house in Mayfair or a flat in Piccadilly, and settle down to a hectic life?'

'I'm coming here,' she said definitely. 'The more I see of the house the more determined I am. It's a lovely place.'

'Then let's vet the grounds,' said Luke.

They walked through the rank grass at the back of the house. There was a courtyard here, and the wall which separated Longhall from Gillywood Farm was

not more than fifty yards away. Longhall was built in the very corner of the estate, or rather, in the narrow part of a pear-shaped area of down-land.

Luke went very carefully along the wall as though he were looking for defects. There was a stout wooden wall door immediately behind the centre of the house. The turf below was scraped and torn. He saw signs of oil on the lock. Evidently this doorway, which gave communication between Gillywood and Longhall, had recently been used.

‘Do any of your keys fit this?’

She took them from her bag and he tested them all, without finding one that fitted. He made a note in a pocket-book.

‘That lock must be changed.’

Here, as in the immediate vicinity of Gillywood Cottage, the wall was topped by a four-feet width of tough wire-netting, which had obviously been recently put up.

‘Goodie plays a lot of tennis, doesn’t he?’ he asked drily.

He found a rotting ladder, mounted gingerly to the top of the wall and took a survey of the land beyond. To the right, and close at hand, were the disused stables; a little to the left ran the southern wire fence. It ran back for three or four hundred yards, then turned right to enclose Gillywood Cottage from the back. Fifty yards away was a big cement mound, which apparently had no utility and certainly added nothing to the beauty of the heath. On the face of the quarry wall a mile and a half away he saw two dark openings, which he knew to be Perrywig Caves, famous in history and associated with various smugglers and an indubitable murder. Between the caves and the house was a large, straggling planta-

tion. To the right of this, a bright red building, which was Mr. Goodie's stables.

The place was not unfamiliar to him; he had explored it thoroughly. Some day he would get behind the barred gate of the cave to discover what treasure it held. There were dark passages in Goodie's past upon which the light of day had never been thrown. Even Scotland Yard, with its matchless system of espionage, was compelled to rely on vague and distorted material for facts.

When three people independently tell an identical story, the three being unknown to one another that story becomes a fact on which Scotland Yard can move—no three stories alike had ever been told about Goodie. In his secretive and shadowy way he had touched the fringe of great crimes without being identified with their perpetration.

Luke knew him to be a strong, merciless man, but had never suspected his one weakness and his supreme ambition. He knew nothing of the library which filled the upper floor of Gillywood Cottage, or the typewriter at which Mr. Goodie sat in the quiet hours of the night, preparing his *Magnum Opus*. Luke did not know, but he suspected, that the trainer never spent a night away from his cottage, and that he came back every night from Doncaster and returned in the early hours of the morning.

'Well, what did you see?' asked the girl impatiently, for he had been a long time at his survey.

'Land, and yet more land. Fences, and more fences. New stable buildings, and a concrete heap which meant nothing to me. You're going to stay here, are you?'

'Not tonight,' she smiled; 'but I'm certainly coming here to live.'

‘Then I’d better hunt up a bailiff for you,’ he said. ‘He’ll take all the arrangements about the land off your hands, and he’ll be invaluable when you settle in the house.’

He was as good as his word. In the course of the next few days he sent to her hotel half a dozen women servants to choose from, a butler, a footman, and the rat-catcher, Mr. Lane. He reintroduced this gentleman by telephone.

‘He’s had quite a lot of experience as a land steward. He’s an ex-member of the Berkshire Constabulary and a pretty tough fellow in a fight.’

‘Who’s he going to fight?’ she demanded.

‘Almost anybody—you never know,’ said Luke vaguely. ‘Honestly, I recommend him. The butler is an ex-police officer . . .’

‘Are you trying to turn my house into a police station?’ she asked.

‘There are few nicer places,’ he said.

She was satisfied with the staff he sent. Obviously he had taken a great deal of trouble and she was grateful to him—and had reason for greater gratitude when their services came to be proved.

For the next two weeks she was an almost daily visitor to the house. Furniture went down in a procession of vans; Longhall resounded with the tap-tap of the carpet-layers’ hammers, glaziers and plumbers filled the place and, under the direction of Lane, lawns and flower-beds were evolved from the chaos of what had once been a beautiful garden. Wild and dishevelled hedges became trimmed and uniform; dingy windows became crystal clear; the unsightly wreckage of a barn at the back of the house vanished in a night. The fascination of Longhall

grew and grew; and one day she came with all her trunks and, pretending that her bedroom did not smell faintly of one kind of paint, and the central heating of another, she entered into possession and gave a house-warming party consisting of one guest.

'You ought to have asked the vicar; one always does on these occasions. By the way, are you Anglican or Holy Roman?'

She refused to make the revelation.

She had seen nothing of Goodie, but from her bedroom window, a large room facing south and west, she could see every morning his horses in silhouette passing along the top of the downs; and as day followed day, the mystery of the green and white cottage, just visible through the trees and the wire fences, became more and more absorbing an interest.

It worried her a little to realise how completely dependent she had come to be upon the detective. He permeated her life, could not be shaken off—nor had she any desire to shake him off. His manner towards her never varied; he was the same familiar dominating man she had known on the *Asturia* and had met in the marketplace at Doncaster. He never stepped across the border line towards any greater intimacy, and he gave her a hint of his mental attitude towards her when one day he told her that he looked upon her as his young brother. She did not know whether she was pleased or annoyed by this relationship which he had thrust upon her. As a working arrangement, however, it was very satisfactory.

She was in London two or three days in the week and sometimes met him for lunch. She liked meeting him, because he had always something to tell her, some item

of gossip about his favourite obsession, the Green Ribbon organisation.

Trigger had produced a most unexpected Transaction in peculiar circumstances. There was a race at the First Autumn Meeting at Newmarket, one of those events for which horses are entered as foals and, as is usual in these circumstances, only a field of three turned out to contest the prize. Two of them were well-known public performers; the third, who was a three-year-old, had only run once, then moderately, in the spring of the year. Long odds were laid on the fancied horse, who had run remarkably well in the St. Leger; the second favourite was 8—1 against, and the unknown quantity, for some unknown reason, was quoted at 100—6. It should have been 100—1. And the despised outsider had won very easily. It was a Trigger's Transaction, and what gave the event unusual significance was the fact that, immediately after the race, the other two competitors were found to have a high temperature and it was generally believed in racing circles that they had been 'got at'. There was no breath of suspicion against the winner, who was owned by the impecunious son of an Irish peer.

'Nominally owned, that is to say,' said Luke. 'The Honourable Henry hasn't got two bobs to rub together. The horse certainly belongs to the gang. Both the sick horses were well when they reached the course, but both were seen to kick and jump when they were being led round the ring half an hour before the race started. Which proves nothing—undoubtedly the winner is very useful, and may very easily have won on his merits, for the time was very fast. But Trigger's advisers were making sure. That was easy, with only three runners. Trigger hasn't left his office for three days; he's been sleeping on the

premises and having his meals sent in—he's got a very cosy little suite which connects with his office by a small lift. I'm looking forward to this afternoon: I've an appointment with him.'

They were lunching at the Ritz, which in itself was a source of uneasiness to the girl. She knew that police officers were not exorbitantly paid and was growing uncomfortable with his repeated hospitality. He took her to the most expensive restaurants. It was impossible that she should offer to pay, and her one attempt to assert her independence had been cut short by Luke in his iciest manner.

It was now that he told her—he had mentioned the fact before, but she had forgotten—that he had an income of his own apart from his police pay.

He would have left the service years before, had not the turf duty come along; it was too interesting to miss.

He escorted her back to the hotel where she was staying the night, and strolled down Lower Regent Street to keep his appointment.

A smart-uniformed commissioner ushered him into a panelled waiting-room; and presently came back to conduct him to Mr. Trigger's sanctum. It was a large room overlooking Regent Street, and money had not been spared in its furnishing. Mr. Trigger sat in his shirt-sleeves, though the day was by no means hot, behind a rosewood table which was covered with telephones and the paraphernalia of writing. It amused Mr. Luke to see a small bronze statuette of Napoleon placed so that it immediately faced the owner of the office.

'Sit down, Mr. Luke.' The little man bustled to his feet, pushed forward a morocco-covered chair, and waited until his visitor was seated before he himself sat

down. 'I'm that busy I don't know which way to turn.'

He had a Cockney voice, but he was a smiling, jovial little man, with a frank, rather honest face. Luke liked him. He was at least human. He would have made a success of any business, though he could not discover one for which his peculiar qualities better fitted him.

'I know what you've come to see me about. It's this Kalamoo affair.'

He mentioned the name of the outsider which had beaten the two sick horses at Newmarket.

'Well, I'll tell you straight, Mr. Luke, I don't know anything about horses. I wouldn't know one from another. They're just horses to me. And if they've got horns they're cows!'

He chuckled at this and pushed a cigar box towards his visitor.

'All I know is that this is the headquarters of Trigger's Transactions. I get a horse from the most reliable source I know, and I send it out to my clients and collect the dough. I don't know whether the horse is a good horse or a bad one. He's only a name to me. I hate racing; I wouldn't go on a racecourse if you paid me—except that I have to go there sometimes. Give me golf! There's a game.'

He pointed proudly to a microscopically small silver cup which occupied a place of honour on the ornate chimney-piece. And he was speaking the truth: of that Luke was sure. He was less interested in racing than Luke was interested in aviation. It was not he who invented the coups—he merely exploited them.

'I'll tell you the truth, Mr. Luke—I don't know whether a horse has got a chance or whether it hasn't. I've never bought a book of form in my life, and if I did

I wouldn't be able to understand it. I do nothing that's contrary to the Rules of Racing. I know that because I've studied 'em. I don't communicate with stable boys or jockeys or trainers or anything. I'm just a human machine, so to speak.'

'Somebody knows about horses—I mean, some of your friends.'

The fat little man shrugged his shoulders.

'Naturally! I'm not going to give you any nonsense, Mr. Luke. You know as well as I do that the doctor and Mr. Goodie are in this business, and Mr. Rustem has got a sort of share. They manage the horse part of it. It's an open secret. These gentlemen have devoted their lives, as it were, to the noble sport of horse-racing, and what they don't know about horses isn't worth finding out. I don't want to know. I take in the money and put it in the bank ...'

'All of it?' asked Luke.

Mr. Trigger smiled reproachfully.

'Come, come, come, Inspector! What a question to ask a business man! I put it in the bank, as I say, and I take out money that I have to pay, and that's the end of the business as far as I'm concerned.'

'Have you ever met the owner of Kalamoo?'

'I've never met any owners,' said Mr. Trigger cheerfully. 'I daresay I've got a few amongst my clients, but I don't meet 'em. My job is to see that the staff do their work—the best paid staff in London, Mr. Luke. None of these girls gets less than twenty a week; most of 'em get twenty-five. They come at eleven in the morning and they're off at five in the afternoon. I've got a beautiful lunch room and lounge for them upstairs.'

'You don't employ any men?'

Mr. Trigger smiled again.

'Am I mad? No, men talk. These girls don't know anything about horses, either—and they don't talk. My messengers are all old army men. I never employ a fellow who hasn't held the rank of sergeant-major. I never employ a single man; I like 'em married, with a family dependent on 'em, so that they can't afford to lose a job; and I only take 'em when they're so old that nobody else would employ 'em, and even then I check 'em up. When they open my envelopes to put 'em in at the post office they know they're under the eye of an inspector—or they think they are. Organisation—that's my job.'

'And you do it remarkably well, Trigger.'

Mr. Trigger beamed complacently.

'I'm a pretty useful man,' he agreed. Then, in a more serious tone: 'So you see, Inspector, it's no use asking me about any of these horses or the owners, or why horses run or why they win. That's not my job at all. I've people doing that for me, and I've got to rely on them.'

Luke nodded towards the wall behind where the little man sat.

'You wouldn't like to open that safe and show me all the pretty things inside?' he asked.

Mr. Trigger chuckled with delight.

'You'd be disappointed—you would really. There's nothing there. A few trays of stencil plates for that addressing machine'—he pointed to a large cabinet in one corner of the room—'a small box of movable rubber type, and that's all. I'll show you round the office if you like.'

He got up, put on his coat and went out into the large room where the long lines of girl clerks were sitting, each

at a desk which was equipped with a clock and a date pad.

'The general correspondence room is upstairs,' explained Trigger. 'Naturally we get thousands and hundreds of thousands of people who want to be in on our transactions. We take about four in a thousand. We only take the recommendations of our true, tried and trusted clients—and we give them a good look over before we cut their names on a stencil plate.'

Each girl had a card index, which bore no name, but the numbers of the clients. Before each were bundles of addressed telegram forms, each little bundle held together by a clip.

'They came in this morning; they'll be transferred to my safe this evening. The girls' job is to make a note of the amount of money that's been invested. In some cases clients use codes, but I've got a copy of their codes, and attached to each of those little bundles will be a card showing the amount every client is betting. After the race the girl checks up the amount he's won and the amount due to us. It's method.'

Luke passed along the line of desks, and scarcely received notice from the busy recorders.

He knew of the organisation but had never seen it close at hand. He was full of admiration for the little man, who had taken the least promising of professions and won such a unique position. Whatever was dark and sinister behind Trigger's Transactions Trigger knew nothing about, though he would have been a fool if he had not suspected that his partners 'assisted luck'.

Trigger took him up to his private suite, which, to Luke's astonishment, was plainly furnished.

'I've no visitors, and I only sleep here when I'm pretty

hard pressed,' he said. 'A pretty lot of girls, aren't they? But I've never taken one out to supper, and the only girl that ever tried to give me the glad eye I fired on the spot. Business is business, love is love, and they don't mix. I've nobody here that doesn't belong to the Transactions. Not Mr. Goodie, or the doctor or anybody.'

Luke went away from the palatial office, very little wiser than he had been when he came. Not that he had expected much information of the kind he required. He had, he was sure, a line on the little organiser. He was the one man in the confederacy who could never be convicted. This was an important conclusion to reach, because he could now afford to drop direct observation of the Green Ribbon Agency, and concentrate on the two men who supplied the raw material which Mr. Trigger turned into gold.

He excluded Rustem. That sleek man was an agent and a tool, initiated nothing, except perhaps a scheme for the evasion of unpleasant consequences.

Dr. Blanter was a heavy drinker, and an habitu  of certain unlicensed night clubs, not of the most savoury character. That night he went to the most hectic of them. At ten minutes past twelve the police raided the club and removed the visitors to a police station.

Usually, ladies and gentlemen who find themselves in that unhappy position are treated with the greatest consideration; they are not searched, and they are given a certain amount of freedom in the waiting-room until their friends come to bail them out. On this occasion, however, the police were most thorough.

Dr. Blanter, protesting violently, was completely searched, his articles of value and his keys taken from him, and he was locked in the detention room. It was

three hours before he was released and his valuables handed back to him. By this time he had cooled down and made no fuss; indeed, that three hours had been the most unhappy of his life. He saw behind the raid and his detention something more than an offence against the licensing laws.

It was four o'clock when he got home, and there was nothing in the orderly appearance of his bachelor flat to suggest that for two hours it had been in the uninterrupted possession of four skilled and expeditious men who had searched every drawer, every cupboard, read every letter, diary and written word that the flat contained. But for Luke it was a blank evening.

4

The long string of racehorses walked slowly and stiffly up the slope of the downs, and disappeared over the crest. Behind them, riding at a distance Elizabeth saw Li Goodie. He rode alone on a big, black horse, his chin on his chest, his eyes half closed. To Elizabeth, watching through a powerful pair of prismatic glasses, he seemed to be asleep, but there was no more wide awake man in Berkshire that day than Elijah Goodie.

He reached the gallop, and sat alone while his head lad gave the boys instructions. It was probably the only stable in England where English was seldom spoken. He changed the riders every two years, and from time to time found himself engaged in a battle with the Labour Ministry, for permits for foreign employees were difficult to obtain.

They had a club house of their own, went to London in batches, under the charge of one of their English-speaking members. They never went to the village, and the nearest Catholic church was twenty miles away. They rode like cats; there were two of them at least who would have shone on an English racecourse, but he never permitted them to take a jockey's licence or ride in public.

In all cases Goodie's horses and Goodie's coups were ridden by the best of the English jockeys, who knew nothing of their charges' merits until they were leaving

the paddock gate. The formula was invariably the same :
'You'll get five hundred pounds for winning this race.'
If this didn't come, the jockeys knew that the horse was not seriously expected.

Goodie sat, gloomily watching the horses flying across the downs towards him, galloping two and two. All passed him save one, and he became very alert when that solitary figure appeared on the skyline. It was Field of Glory, the Stockton winner: a racing machine that moved in effortless style, covering an extraordinary amount of ground with every stride. He flew past where Mr. Goodie sat and, reining round his horse, the trainer trotted after the rider. It was five minutes before he came up to him. 'Well?' he asked.

The swarthy lad who rode him grinned.

'An aeroplane, señor. He goes better and better every day.'

Goodie grunted something, dismounted and, going up to the horse, patted his neck. He walked round him, feeling every leg.

'Cover him up and walk him back to the stable, Jose,' he said in Spanish.

He watched the horse for a very long time in silence, then, mounting his hack, he ambled back to the cottage. Elizabeth saw him coming, put down her glasses and withdrew further into the room, where she could observe him without herself being observed.

She saw him throw a glance in the direction of the house, and then his chin went forward on his chest again. Mr. Goodie was thinking, not of horses or of women, but of the stored manuscript which was half completed but which perhaps would never see the light of day. For he was engaged in the incredible task of writing a true auto-

biography, and this was a very urgent reason for the wire cage in which he lived.

He went upstairs to his study, unlocked the safe and took out the last sheets of his manuscript. He read them over closely and, though he rarely smiled, he smiled now at the thought of Luke; for in the book of which these pages formed part, he had set forth, without apology or excuse, the story of deeds which were afterwards to give him immortal notoriety.

That he should write these memoirs at all was an act of madness, an aberration in which vanity and the desire for dangerous living played their appointed part. But the understandable reason was his loneliness. His book was his one companion; throughout the dark hours of the night they would sit together, the written page and the yellow-faced man, leering at one another knowingly.

As one of the maids had said in Elizabeth's hearing, life in this sleepy hollow was 'not exactly lively'. She fought against even the disloyalty of the thought that she was a little bored by her seclusion, but she *was* a little bored, though she rode every day, and went up to London at least twice a week.

She had to fight against the inclination to stay on another day at the hotel, or to see a play which in her heart of hearts she knew she did not want to see, but which was an excuse for London. She was entirely without friends, and felt no inclination to make any. She saw the vicar and his wife, an acidulated woman, and her daughters, who lived a mile from her. They called and talked about nothing in particular. She returned the call and thanked God it was all over.

It irritated her that she missed Luke. She had occasion

to write to him once, and was staggered to discover that she didn't know his initials. She was emboldened to call him up on the telephone and demand them.

'M. M., but I only use one,' he said.

'What does M. M. stand for?'

'I refuse to make any statement. It's a guilty secret that I've kept for years. Can't you guess?'

And then an inspiration came to her.

'Not Matthew Mark?' she gasped.

'Mark,' he said loudly. 'I've forgotten I was ever called Matthew, and I've not forgiven my parents even for the Mark.'

She came back from London one night, tired and a little irritable. It was not, she told herself, because Mr. Luke was away when she called him up—he knew she was coming to London, had made a tentative engagement with her, and yet had not thought it worth while to excuse himself.

She had brought back a car full of books, had spent the whole afternoon in a wild orgy of buying. They would at least decorate the new shelves of her little study.

At nine o'clock she decided she was tired and would go to bed, but at a quarter past nine, when she was in bed, she decided that the last thing in the world she wanted to do was to sleep. She got up, put on a dressing-gown and, after trying vainly to read the most alluring of the books she had bought that day, she walked to the window and looked between the curtains. In the glorious moonlight the scarred face of the downs showed whitely. She could even see the little black patches which were the entrances of Perrywig Caves. Turning out the light, she pulled back the blinds and drew a chair to the open window. It was a warm, almost sultry night in early Octo-

ber; a night for dreaming, if one could think of anything more interesting than Matthew Mark Luke.

Mark must be definitely put in his place. Unfortunately he had anticipated her, and had put himself in an impregnable position. He wasn't a person to be dropped—he might very well anticipate her here.

As she sat musing, she heard a door slam. It came from the direction of the cottage. Presently, against its whitewashed wall, a man came into view. By now she could recognise Mr. Goodie at a distance. He moved softly towards the big concrete mound that had excited Mr. Luke's curiosity. She heard the grating of an iron door swinging on its hinges, and heard him murmuring something, and then a low whistle.

He disappeared behind a clump of bushes, but presently came into view. He was walking at the farthest corner of the fence, carrying something in his hand, and behind him were two great dogs, with long, switching tails.

Moonlight plays strange tricks, and it seemed to her that those two dogs were of an enormous size. They padded the lawn at his heels, now in the shadow, now clearly visible; two great black dogs, walking side by side, their noses to the ground. One of them bounded to the left; he had probably seen a rabbit. She heard Goodie's snarl and, as the beast came shrinking back, the crack of a whip.

The figures grew fainter and fainter. They were making for Perrywig Caves, and she went in search of her field glasses. There was a slight mist on the ground which made it impossible to see very distinctly. An hour passed before they came into sight again, and this time the dogs were ahead of him, and stood waiting for him to open the gate. A cloud had come over the moon, and

as he stepped to the farther fence she could see nothing. The slamming of the cottage door proclaimed his return.

She saw one of the beasts a little later; it came nosing along the wall and passed out of sight. She heard it sneeze, and then caught a glimpse of it as it ran towards the farthest side of the concrete mound.

She drew the curtains and got into bed, and fell into a restless sleep. Twice she woke and looked at the clock, and found in each case that less than an hour had passed. Then, settling down, sleep came to her. Hardly had a sense of unconsciousness come when she was wide awake. A scream came into her dreams. She sat up in bed, her whole body trembling. It came again—the high, howling shriek of anguish; such a scream as might have come from a torture chamber. Her blood froze within her; she was incapable of movement. A third time it came; a pitiful, sobbing wail of sound. She forced herself out of bed, staggered to the window and pulled back the curtains.

The sound had come from the direction of Perrywig Caves, but how near or far it was she could not tell. As she stood staring out . . .

‘I hope you’re not frightened, miss?’

The voice came from underneath the window, and she jumped. The man who was standing there was wrapped to his chin in a greatcoat, but she recognised the voice and knew it was Lane, the steward, before he gave his name. Under his arm the faint light showed the gleam of a gun-barrel.

‘What was it?’ she whispered, and in her relief she had a wild desire to raise his salary.

‘I don’t know, miss. I’ve been up since four, and I heard nothing till just now.’

'Why have you got that gun?'

'I thought there might be some poachers about.'

He walked forward in the darkness towards the wall, and after a while came back.

'I had a new lock put on that door—a Yale. You'll find the key in your library. I wouldn't advise you to open that door, miss—day or night.'

'What dogs are those?' she asked.

'Dogs? Oh, you saw them, did you? He's been out, has he—Goodie, I mean? Did he have his dogs with him?'

'He went towards Perrywig Caves,' she said, and to her surprise the man answered coolly:

'I wondered if he might. Rum time for training race-horses, isn't it, miss?'

'What kind of dogs are they?' she asked again.

'I'm blest if I know,' said the man. 'I've heard about them but never seen them. He keeps them in a sort of underground kennel. That's why I think you'd better not go through that door: they're pretty dangerous. He can manage them because he's an animal trainer.'

All this conversation was carried on in a low tone, but evidently it had reached one wakeful person, for she heard a back door open and the voice of Panton, the butler.

'Is that you, Jimmy?'

'That's me,' said Lane.

Panton came into view. She saw him put something into his pocket and wondered what he had been carrying.

'I'm sorry, miss. I thought I heard somebody calling.'

'You must be a light sleeper, Panton,' she said.

They moved round the corner of the house, whispering together, and she went back into the room and slipped into bed with an unaccustomed sense of luxury and hap-

piness. While she was trying to analyse that sense of happiness, the figure and voice of Luke obtruded through all her reasoning. Luke, who had furnished her with two strong guards who were alert to every whisper. She fell asleep, and when she woke it was nearly ten o'clock and the sun was pouring through the half-drawn curtains.

Dr. Blanter took the unusual course of calling at Scotland Yard to lodge a complaint. He was intensely annoyed that, after seeking the highest officials, he was handed down from one subordinate to another, until he found himself sitting opposite the imperturbable Mr. Luke.

'Perfectly disgraceful, I agree with you, Doctor,' said Luke, a frown of disapproval corrugating his brow. 'I don't know whether I've heard anything so monstrous. They took you from a night club, they put you in the detention room, searched you—which, of course, is the ordinary routine, though it's not usual in such cases. I can only suggest that the officer in charge thought that, overcome by the horror of your position, you might lay violent hands on yourself.'

'Don't try to pull my leg, Inspector,' growled Dr. Blanter. 'You know that's not what I'm complaining of. I'm complaining of this fact—that whilst I was held in the cells, three or four of your busy fellows came along to my flat and searched it. You can't say they didn't, because a neighbour of mine on the other side of the courtyard saw them at it; he thought they were burglars and called the police.'

'Do you mean to tell me they didn't draw the curtains?' asked Luke, in horror. 'The careless devils!'

'I'm going to take this matter to the House of Commons.'

'I should,' said Luke firmly, 'and to the House of Lords. It's a much more respectable place.'

'If the police can search my house without a search warrant . . .'

'They may have been burglars, after all,' suggested Luke. 'Your kindly neighbour was probably right. And where was the admirable but bibulous Stoofer?'

He knew the big brute of a man who acted as body-guard and 'minder' to the doctor. It was no secret that the master and man got drunk together—the doctor had been evicted from his one respectable club for introducing his servant as a guest.

'Tight, was he?' suggested Luke, when the doctor made no reply. 'Did the police come when your neighbour telephoned for them?'

'They didn't,' snapped Dr. Blanter. 'You know perfectly well why they didn't come. I'm not going to stand it. If you've anything against me, come into the open and charge me.'

'With what?' asked Luke blandly. 'Give me a suggestion; tell me anything I can charge you with, and I'll oblige you with the greatest of pleasure. I know nothing definite against you, Doctor.' He leaned his elbows on the table and looked straight at the big man's face. 'I know, of course, that you're a blackguard and a beast and the biggest lag in London, that you've been guilty of offences which, if the Medical Association could have proved their case and the police could have found a few witnesses who weren't bribed or suborned, would have put you into Dartmoor for seven years. But I know nothing definitely against you.'

The man's face had gone from red to purple, from purple to a sickly yellow. 'I'll break you for this!'

'I don't think so,' said Luke, in a gentle, even voice. 'You and I are alone, and I'm telling you just what you are. I know you're in every swindle that's exploited by the Green Ribbon; I know that you haven't, in the whole of your gross body, a single spark of pity or human kindness. If you had, you could never have taken that dead girl and dropped her into the mill-pond.'

He was referring now to one of the darkest episodes in Dr. Blanter's life, the one case which, if it could have been brought home to him, would have sent him to prison for life.

'I know that you'd cut my throat with no more compunction than you'd cut a pig's—but I can't prove it. And since I can't prove it, you're a free man. Am I far enough in the open for you?'

Blanter swallowed the lump in his throat. His big hands, resting on the table, were shaking with fury and not, as Luke well knew, with fear; for fear was not in the man.

'At the back of my mind,' the detective went on, 'I have a feeling that you're concerned in a pretty ugly crime, and I don't know what it is.'

And then Luke remembered a grisly little present that a detective officer had given him that morning. He put his hand in his pocket, took out a small piece of chalk and passed it across the table.

'Here's a little souvenir, a mascot,' he said.

Blanter glowered down at it.

'It's the piece of chalk that was used this morning at the execution of the Highbury murderer. They made a mark with it for his feet on the trap. Keep it for luck. We'll find another little bit of chalk for you when your turn comes.'

This time he had hit home, got right under the skin of the giant. Blanter's big jaw dropped, and into his eyes came momentarily the yellow flag of fear. He stared down at the chalk, his face twisted in an expression of repugnance and horror; then he rose, pushing back his chair.

'Take it. Show it to Goodie—he's yellow too.'

Luke walked to the door and pulled it open.

'Get out,' he said briefly and without a word or a look Dr. Blanter walked past him, and Luke pulled open the window to air the room. He was inclined to be a little extravagant in moments of great emotion.

It was not his own room; he was occupying for the time being the office of a superior, who came in to complain testily of draughts.

'Did you see him?'

'I not only saw him but scolded him,' said Mark Luke.

By the time he reached his own office he was a little doubtful as to whether he had not said too much. He had no illusions about Dr. Blanter. He was a man who would stop at nothing, and it was not the question of his promotion that was worrying Mr. Luke so much as the question of his life. He rang the bell for his clerk.

'There'll be a box of poisoned chocolates come here in a day or two,' he said. 'Send them to Superintendent Kersin.'

He never had liked Kersin.

But Dr. Blanter had a soul above poisoned chocolates, and at that very moment was planning something particularly ingenious for the discomfiture of the man who for the first time in his life had frightened him.

Luke had promised to come down to lunch that Sunday, but probably would forget all about the engagement, and not even apologise for his lapse. Elizabeth

was agreeably surprised when she returned from a morning ride to find him sunning himself before the house in a deep wicker chair.

‘So you heard the ghost, did you?’ he greeted her, without attempting to rise. He really had the worst manners of any man she knew. ‘Well, are you coming back to London like a sensible lady?’

He rose lazily as she came up to him.

‘The rats, I hear, have disappeared. Messrs. Rustem and Goodie wasted a lot of time and money and energy for nothing. Are you coming back to London?’

‘Why should I?’ she asked.

‘Because this is a very lonely life for an attractive girl, and because I’ve done a very stupid thing.’

He followed her into the drawing room, and had the grace to put the cushions in a chair for her.

‘It’s amazing to hear you make such a confession,’ she said. ‘What have you done?’

‘Some unknown person called me up on the phone yesterday and asked me if I knew you. When I said that I did, he said something particularly foul about you. It was, of course, the sheerest invention, and was said with a purpose. Like a fool, I raved at him. It was what he wanted, of course, and he had cut off before I realised what a stupid fool I’d been.’

She stared at him.

‘I don’t understand.’

‘To be caught by a simple trick like that! I’m ashamed of myself.’

‘But what does it mean? I still don’t understand. What foul thing did he say?’

‘That’s neither here nor there,’ he said. ‘The point was that the man at the other end wanted to know

whether I cared sufficiently about you to go raving mad at the first word of abuse—and he knows.'

Before she could speak he went on.

'When I say "cared sufficiently about you", I do not mean that I'm desperately in love with you. It merely means that I'm crazy about you. There is a subtle distinction between the two emotions.'

'I hope there is,' she said coldly. 'Are you staying to lunch?'

'I refuse to be snubbed,' said Mark Luke. 'As I told you before, I regard you as my younger brother. One is fond of younger brothers—at least, some younger brothers.'

'I don't think it is necessary to pursue this rather embarrassing topic, is it?' she asked, angry with him, more angry with herself that she had betrayed her annoyance.

'It is, up to a point.'

It was impossible to quench Mr. Luke.

'For example, if this gentleman thinks he can hurt me by hurting you, it's rather important that you should be put out of reach. Dr. Blanter is the one man I cannot allow you to meet.'

She turned swiftly on him, making no disguise of her anger now.

'You could have put that a little more tactfully, couldn't you, Mark?' she asked wrathfully. 'He may be a very undesirable sort of man, but if I've given you the right to determine who I shall meet and who I shall not, I've done so unknowingly, and I'm sorry that I've put you in a false position. You've been very good to me and I appreciate it, but I rather hate your way of assuming that you're responsible for my life. It's not embarrassing, it's irritating.'

He did not answer; he was looking at her very seriously. Then, after a long interval of silence, he said: 'I suppose it is. My manners aren't of the best. I'm sorry.'

Instantly she felt penitent, but controlled herself to hide her contrition. She had gained a little victory, but not without casualties. In some subtle way his attitude had changed towards her. She thought he had no attitude but one, but here she was mistaken.

Throughout lunch she strove vainly to get back to the old footing, which was infinitely preferable to the more correct and respectful attitude he adopted now. In the end she accused him of sulking, and he laughed.

'I hope not, but you never know with a man: they're such vain creatures and can sulk so easily. Have you seen any more of your dogs?'

She shook her head.

'Take a closer look at them when you see them again,' he said, 'and don't be frightened.'

'Dogs don't frighten me.'

He stayed an hour after lunch, and never had she thought it possible to find in him such a capacity for small talk. When he went away he left her with a sense of dissatisfaction—dissatisfaction with herself, with him, with Longhall, with her present mode of living, and with the long evening to come.

She rang for a maid.

'Pack my suitcase and telephone to the Ritz for a suite; and tell the chauffeur I'm going to London tonight.'

It was the first time she did not notify her movements to Mark. She realised this with a start, not because of the omission, but dismayed by the consciousness of her habit.

London on a wet Sunday evening is a dull place even

in a bright and sparkling hotel. There was not even the excuse of a theatre to take her out. She went to sleep that night, thoroughly miserable, and could have cried if she had dared to admit to herself an excuse for tears.

Luke was working in his office the next morning when his clerk came to tell him that a man had called.

'Looks like somebody who wants to touch you, sir.'

'Bring in this ambitious person,' said Luke.

He swung round in his swivelled chair to meet the dilapidated little man who stood apologetically in the doorway, his greasy old cap in his hand.

'Hullo, Punch! Come in.'

He nodded to his clerk to withdraw.

Punch had gone several degrees down the scale of respectability since Luke had seen him at Doncaster. His shoes were in need of repair; he was unshaven, and had obviously slept in his clothes the previous night, and probably many other previous nights.

'I walked up from Newbury, Mr. Luke. Couldn't get a brief to get on to the course. If I had, and I'd found anybody with a couple of bob, I'd have backed the winner of the Cup. Old Goodie was there, but when I asked him for the price of a drink he told me to go to hell. If I'd seen Trigger I'd have got it. Trigger's not a bad feller. I did a couple of jobs for him when he was in a small way, and he's always paid well . . .'

'You're not going to tell me the story of your life, Punch,' said Luke. 'What do you want?'

The man licked his cracked lips.

'I've had nothing to eat since yesterday.'

'And nothing to drink since this morning.'

The man shook his head vigorously.

'I'm on the waggon, I am indeed, Mr. Luke. More than a hundred thousand pounds have passed through my hands through booze, and it took me until a month ago to realise it. That's what I wanted to see you about. It isn't going straight, it's going sober, and I know you're the sort of gentleman who wouldn't think twice about helping a feller if you thought he was willing to help himself.'

'You've had a few chances, Punch.'

The man nodded.

'Yes, I have,' he said bitterly. 'That's why I'm having no chances now. Almost anybody's willing to help a man once, even twice; it's when he gets a regular sponger, as I've been, that he's finished—can't even raise the price of a meal. I'm not blaming anybody except meself. Nobody believes me when I tell 'em I've gone sober.'

Luke looked at him thoughtfully.

'I wonder if I could trust you,' he said, and interrupted the little man's protestations with a gesture. 'Anyway, I'm going to take a chance with you, Punch, and if you let me down I'll never let up on you!'

He took out his pocket-book and found two five-pound notes.

'Go out, have a bath, burn your clothes and get a respectable suit and somewhere to live. Report to me this afternoon; and keep your mouth shut about me.'

Punch had left the room when Luke took from a locked drawer three large blue folders marked 'Green Ribbon'. He added a few notes to the dossier of Mr. Trigger and, reading for the twentieth time the meagre particulars he had of that gentleman, could find little in the details of his known life that was in any way reprehensible.

Dr. Blanter's dossier was a much more important affair. It contained newspaper cuttings of two inquests, particulars of a hearing before the Medical Association, and a score of letters, half of which were anonymous, the majority written by illiterate people. A current record of the doctor's movements lay before him, but gave him little news that was of any value.

It was generally believed at Scotland Yard that the doctor had associations with several organised cliques of criminals, 'clique' being a word preferable to 'gang' to describe the loose associations of men, most of whom were operating individually, yet were bound together by some common object or interest, and could be relied upon to act in concert if occasion arose.

Blanter was a liberal paymaster, and he had also at his command a small army of men and women who had been in his employ at some period or other—the staffs of odd little night clubs which he had financed, and establishments of a less reputable character. He was known to be a man who could be depended upon to provide funds for the defence of those who had been brought within the reach of the law, and in one way and another he had accumulated a formidable reserve, upon which he could call in his necessity.

Luke, at any rate, did not underrate the importance of this man, and had taken certain precautions.

A young and attractive woman without friends is an anomaly. Elizabeth Gray began to realise that her decision to live in the least residential portion of the county of Berkshire was a mistake. The loveliness of the country, the vistas of rolling green, the splashes of colour which had grown, as if by magic, at the hands of her

gardener, the lovely quietude of an old house, and the comforting sense of responsibility which she derived from its management—all these things were weighed down by her isolation.

Just before lunch a telegram arrived from Germany: Mr. Garcia had decided to make a leisurely trip through Southern Europe and asked her to write to him care of the Argentine Consulate in Istanbul. If he had given his itinerary or given her an address to which she could cable, she would have packed her clothes and joined him.

She had lived in lonely places before, but it had been a bearable loneliness, since it was inevitable. In this thickly populated island, with all the amenities at hand which her youth and her position could bring her, it was a little freakish in her that she could cut herself off from human society.

Thus she argued, though she told herself that London was within two hours' car ride, and that she had no particular desire to meet anybody. She rode every day, and generally in the afternoon drove about the country in one of those tiny cars which had once excited her derision but which now she found a particularly useful method of transportation.

There was an uneven and badly tended road which led by a circuitous route to the crest of the downs. She had even found a way across the down itself, and the vehicle stood up bravely to the strain she imposed on its chassis.

But a horse was her chief joy. She would ride for hours, without any exact destination. Twice she found herself on a new training ground, where strings of horses were at exercise.

Returning from her ride one morning, she had an experience which she was to remember. She had found her

way down to the level grassland, a gentle slope which avoided the beaten track down which she had come on the previous Sunday. It led her round the face of a grassy bastion, and she was turning for home when she saw two men digging. They were sulky-looking, middle-aged men, and they had already made a great pile of chalky earth which had been flung up on each side of the trench. She brought her horse nearer, wondering what was the reason for the excavation. The two men looked up at her as she rode past, and answered her cheery greeting with a grunt.

The hole had been dug on Goodie's land, and she rode on, giving little thought to the matter. Building methods were mysteries to her; why gangs of men dug holes in the ground, or threw up embankments, was never apparent to her until the finished work advertised its utility.

Lane came to her that evening with some accounts for settlement.

'Has Mr. Goodie notified you he's doing any building on your land, Miss Gray?' he asked. 'I see a couple of his labourers have been very busy for three days excavating at the foot of the downs. I don't know the terms of his lease, but I should say he couldn't erect any buildings without your permission.'

She smiled at this. Her position of authority never ceased to amuse her.

'I'll go into it, Mr. Lane,' she said, but had no intention of doing anything of the sort.

The evening brought an explanation. It was nearly dark; she had driven a long way through the country, and very foolishly had taken, as she thought, a short cut along what was known as the downs road, but which

was little more than a track. It was growing dark when the engine spluttered and stopped. She looked at the petrol gauge and realised the cause. Very foolishly she had forgotten to fill up.

Her situation was by no means desperate. She was within three miles of her house, and she had a good sense of topography. She abandoned the car and continued the journey on foot. It was nearly dusk by the time she began the descent of the southern slope. And then she became aware that between the road and the downs was a motor vehicle of some kind. By the position of the headlights she guessed it was a large van.

She had hardly noted this fact when she saw something walking towards her, and heard the clink of a horse's hoofs as he struck a stone.

Elizabeth moved from the shadow of the plantation. There was no reason why she should be afraid. Possibly it was one of Goodie's farm hands, leading a cart horse. But, though she was not by nature nervous, she felt her heart beating a little faster and a cold shiver ran down her spine.

They were visible now—a man leading a horse—but the man was Goodie. She recognised his hunched shoulders, the droop of his head. They passed her not half a dozen yards away and went on towards the place where she had seen the labourers digging a hole, and where, even in the dim light, she could see piles of chalky soil. Horse and man stopped and, peering through the gathering darkness, she saw that the horse was standing on the edge of the pit. And then she saw Goodie take something bulky from his pocket. She thought he was putting a bridle on to the horse, and she was so interested that she forgot to be nervous.

'Plang!'

It was a noise like the slamming of an iron door. She saw the horse fall heavily and disappear from view, and her heart started racing again as she realised what had happened. The horse had been shot. That pit, dug with such labour, had been prepared for this eventuality. For no reason at all she began to tremble, and for a second thought she was going to faint; the mere realisation was sufficient to enable her to fight off the weakness. She began to move away almost on tip-toe, walking faster and faster, and only just conquering the irresistible inclination to break into a run. She made a circuit to avoid the van, but she passed close enough to see that it was a horse-van, which at the moment was unattended; she passed it at a distance of twenty yards and gained the road.

By the time she reached the house she was nearly hysterical with panic. Luckily none of the staff saw her come in, and she was able to reach her bedroom without making a fool of herself—as she described it afterwards.

When she grew calmer and could think consecutively, she was ashamed of her terror. Save for the darkness, there was nothing mysterious about the happening. Owners of horses occasionally do shoot their charges; possibly this was some favourite of the old man's and he could not bear any other hand to send it to oblivion.

From her bedroom window she searched for the trainer, but could not find him. At nine o'clock she could still see the horse box standing where she had passed it, its lights burning dimly. It had gone in the morning. When she rode out in the early sunlight, after sending her chauffeur to collect her abandoned car, she saw two labourers filling up the hole.

She continued her way to the crest of the downs; and

then, unexpectedly, as she turned on to the level plateau, she came face to face with Goodie. Sitting on his horse, moodily surveying the glorious landscape, he turned his yellow, inscrutable face and met her eyes, and for the first time since they had met at Doncaster he spoke to her.

‘Good morning, Miss Gray.’

She answered him civilly.

‘Didn’t scare you last night, did I?’

She jumped with surprise.

‘I didn’t see you; my man did. I had to shoot an old hack of mine, and I thought I might as well do it when nobody was around . . . there’s generally a lot of picnic parties on the downs, and I hate shooting horses anyway.’

His eyes never left hers.

‘One of these days I hope you’ll sell this place, Miss Gray,’ he went on in his monotonous voice. ‘I’ve got so used to it that I shall hate leaving it. You must come up and see my horses gallop some morning. They’re not much—I mean they’re not very good horses, though I have one or two that can go a bit. They tell me you’re thinking of going into ownership? I never tout for clients, but if you like to send a couple of horses to me you may be sure I shall look after them well and give you a winner occasionally. I’ve one that I’d like to sell you now.’

‘I’m afraid my ownership plans are rather vague,’ she said. ‘I really don’t know how to begin about it.’

He licked his colourless lips and looked past her.

‘I’ve got a horse you could buy for a thousand pounds; it’s worth much more, and I believe the owner wants to sell—Field of Glory. I thought of coming up to see you about it, but then I never tout for clients. He’s a pretty good horse, by Blandford; his dam was a good

winner in Ireland. You might do worse than have your colours carried in public.'

She shook her head.

'I know so little about racing . . .' she began, and the ghost of a smile puckered his face.

'If trainers had to wait for owners who know something about racing, they'd starve,' he said. 'This horse is in the Cambridgeshire, and he might win it. I don't say he will, but he might. You might think it over, Miss Gray.'

He jerked his chin at her, wheeled round and cantered away towards his horses which were walking in a circle at the far end of the gallop.

Elizabeth Gray was puzzled, though she told herself, as she rode back, that there was nothing unusual in a local trainer, who was also a tenant, offering her an opportunity for ownership.

She had occasion to talk to Luke on the phone that day, and she mentioned casually her conversation with Goodie. He was interested.

'If he offered you Field of Glory for a thousand pounds you had a chance of making a bargain, but I'm very glad you didn't seize it,' he said. 'It belongs to a man in the Midlands, a publican—or at least, it's supposed to belong to him. I pretty well guess why Goodie wants to transfer the horse to you!'

'Then let me pretty well understand it,' she said, but he did not accept her invitation.

After she had rung off she realised she had forgotten to tell him about the shooting incident, and afterwards the event faded from her mind.

In the days that followed, Mark Luke neither wrote to nor communicated with her in any way, and she passed

through a brief phase of active dislike of him. Then, towards the end of the week, when she was weary to death of her loneliness, he made his appearance unannounced and unheralded. His reception was a cool one, but he had expected no other, and her attitude became almost icy when she learned that she was not the object of the visit at all, but that he had come down to see her steward. Indeed, he did not go to the house at all until she invited him there.

‘I hate these mysteries, Mark. If I hadn’t been in the lower meadow I shouldn’t have known you were here at all.’

‘Don’t be testy,’ he said, with a return of his old-time manner. ‘I had to see Lane about a matter which is really nothing whatever to do with you.’

A quick retort was on her lips, but she was blessed with a sense of humour, and laughed.

‘You’re an exasperating man and a very bad-mannered one too! You should have come to see me first. Are you staying the night? I’ll arrange for a room . . .’

‘There’s an inn along the road—the Red Lion, I’ve already parked my bag there,’ he said.

‘You could have stayed here.’

He overlooked her inconsistency.

‘I prefer the Red Lion. My hostess doesn’t bark at me or think I’m presuming on her acquaintance, but I’d like to look round your estate, if I may. I haven’t been over it for a long time.’

He intended walking, but she had the horses brought out, and rode by his side through a gate from the stable yard on to the land behind the house. They were within fifty yards of one of the wire fences, following a rough cart track towards the downs. The cottage was out of

sight behind a clump of chestnuts, but they had a good view of the new stables lying on the lower slope of the downs. There was nobody in sight, which was not remarkable, for the day had turned chilly and a few drops of rain had fallen.

'Why is the Perrywig Cave closed?' she asked.

'You mean with a gate? It looks a little sinister, doesn't it? But, as a matter of fact, I believe the big cave has been used as a storehouse for hundreds of years. There's a cut road that leads up to it, and Goodie stores his forage there. I've never been inside them, but I believe the main cave is pretty extensive. It's a natural warehouse.'

They could see now a sprinkling of stable boys moving about the main yard.

'Why does he have only Spanish boys?' she asked, and he chuckled.

'There's nothing particularly menacing in that. He has them because they don't speak English. The curse of the English racing stable is the lad who writes and secretly posts letters to professional backers and tipsters, giving them particulars of recent gallops. The Jockey Club tries to keep this down, but it's almost impossible. Of course, it's against the rules of the Jockey Club, and both the stable lad and the person to whom he writes would be warned off if the fact came out. Happily for all concerned, the truth very seldom escapes; more happily still, stable lads and head lads are such rotten judges that their information isn't as profitable to the people who buy it as you might think. All they know is about their own horses; they're not aware of the fact that other stables are equally confident of winning races.'

He knew the ground much better than she; led her in a semicircle to the foot of a rough road which sloped up to the entrance of the caves. There were two of them, and two miles away was a third, believed by some, though it had never been proved, to communicate with the main cavern. They dismounted, tied their horses to a tree and went the rest of the journey on foot.

At the mouth of the cave Luke made a careful test of the gate. The square bars were three-quarters of an inch in width, and the gate hung on hinges set in the solid rock. He tested the gunmetal locks, and reached to the lower staple which fastened the second piece of the gate to the rocky floor, but it was immovable. The floor was of earth, as far as he could see, and covered by furrow-like marks.

‘A rake of some kind. That’s odd.’

He peered into the dark interior of the cave.

‘And there’s the rake.’ He pointed, but she could not see. ‘Just behind that rocky buttress. I can see three or four teeth of it.’

Remounting their horses, they rode up to the top of the downs. It was growing dark, and heavy banks of clouds were sweeping up from the south-west. They came back to Longhall only just in time, for they were hardly in the house before the rain fell in sheets.

Over dinner he gave her the gossip of the racecourse. Goodie had won a race, a little plate, and the horse had been well backed, but was not a Transaction. It would have started at an outside price, but the doctor had plunged on it. He was a great gambler, and had been known to lose a hundred thousand pounds in one week at Monte Carlo, and even to win as much.

‘He’ll bet on anything; that’s why he’s nothing like

as rich as the noble Trigger and Goodie . . .'

'Is Goodie rich?'

'I should think he's a millionaire twice over! All his money is invested in South American securities, and it's pretty clear where he's going to settle down when this country becomes too hot for him.'

He had not quite got back to the old Mark she knew. There was still a reserve which she could not penetrate, a politeness which was, she ruefully admitted, foreign in him, and much more objectionable than his more casual manner.

A little after ten, just before he left, a telegram was phoned through from London. It was from Garcia, had been handed in at Istanbul and told her he was contemplating going by car across the desert to Jordan.

Rain was falling heavily, and she insisted on taking him to the Red Lion. On the whole, not an unpleasant evening, she thought, and yet not entirely satisfactory, for she was as far from understanding him as she was from understanding herself.

She did not hear the bell ring in the middle of the night; it was not until Panton, the butler, knocked on her door that she woke.

'What is it?' she asked.

'It's Mr. Luke, miss. He wants to see you very urgently.'

She switched on the light, dressed hurriedly and came down. She found Luke in the dining-room. He was wearing a raincoat and his hat was sodden with rain. He had walked two miles through the storm.

'Is anything wrong?' she asked anxiously.

He closed the door of the dining-room.

'Do you know this?'

He took from his pocket a small book; it was bound in limp leather with gilt edges.

The book was vaguely familiar. She took it from his hand and turned the cover. And then she saw on a flyleaf, written in Spanish: 'To my dear friend Alberto Garcia, on his 63rd birthday.' It was a volume of Spanish poetry that she had bought in Buenos Aires, and the writing was her own.

She looked at him bewildered.

'Yes, I gave it to Mr. Garcia.'

'How did it come to be in the bookshelf in my sitting-room?' he asked. 'Did Garcia ever stay at the Red Lion?'

She shook her head.

'Not that I'm aware.'

'I've made myself very unpopular at that hostelry,' he said grimly. 'I wakened up everybody who might know—unfortunately, the proprietor and his wife are away on holiday and most of the staff are new.'

He had gone to bed, he said, but could not sleep and, getting up, had searched the little bookshelf in his sitting-room for something to read. It was an uninteresting collection of books, mainly religious volumes and the dog-eared editions of Victorian novelists. Then he had found this book and turned the pages idly, and only by accident had discovered the inscription on the fly-leaf.

'I knew Garcia couldn't have been here since you've been in residence, because he's been abroad.'

She laughed.

'But is the matter so very urgent that you should wake four sleepy people in the middle of the night? Not that I mind in the least.'

She rang the bell.

'We'll have some coffee—and take off your wet coat. Apart from the fact that you're ruining my beautiful new carpet, you look most uncomfortable.'

Panton, half-dressed, took her order and removed Mark's coat and hat to the hall.

'Yes, it is rather urgent,' he said. 'Have you got Garcia's address in Istanbul?'

She considered.

'Only the Argentine Consulate.'

'They'd be able to put me in touch with him. Do you mind if I get on the phone and send a cable?' he asked.

He scribbled the message on the back of an envelope and, going out into the hall, succeeded in getting 'telegrams' after the usual exasperating interval. The girl went upstairs to complete her dressing. She was wide awake now, and at the back of her mind was an uneasiness which had not yet become panic.

She finished her dressing, turned out the light, and drew back the curtains to air the room. As she did so she saw a light in the distance. It was coming across the meadows from the direction of the downs, and it was a light carried by somebody who was running. There was no mistaking that fact: it jerked to and fro erratically. There is always something rather terrifying about somebody running for no accountable reason, and she felt a shiver run down her spine. She went out on to the landing and called softly to Luke. He had finished his phoning and came up to her, taking two stairs at a time.

'What is it?' he asked.

She told him and he returned with her to the bedroom. The light was nearer now and steadier. She saw it halt at the corner of the wire compound, heard the clang of a gate as it closed and the snap of the lock. It was too dark

to distinguish the man who carried it, for the rain was incessant and formed a misty screen between them; but as he came nearer . . .

'That's Goodie and he's without his dogs. They wouldn't go out on a night like this, anyway.'

The light passed towards the house and they heard the cottage door close.

'What's the matter with his lordship, I wonder?' asked Luke thoughtfully. He glanced at the luminous dial of his watch; it was a quarter to three. 'Where does Lane live?'

'He has a cottage on the road,' she said.

'I suppose you can't get him on the phone?'

She had had a house telephone fixed and one connection was with the steward's cottage.

'I'll get on to him if you don't mind.'

He went into the butler's pantry, where the switch-board was erected, and after a long interval she heard the murmur of his voice talking to Lane. When he came back to the dining-room she had poured out the coffee which Panton had brought. She noticed that the butler too had dressed.

'There was no need for you to get up, Panton.'

'It's all right, miss,' he smiled. 'I've always been an early riser.'

Elizabeth waited till the door closed upon him.

'What's happening?' she asked.

'That's just what I'd like to know.'

Luke took up the little volume, looked at the inscription again and put it back on the table. He asked her how far Lane's cottage was from the entrance to Gillywood Farm, and when she told him that it was less than a hundred yards he was satisfied.

'What did you tell Lane?'

Here he was rather evasive.

'I'm terribly sorry about waking you so early and, it may be, without reason at all. I'm probably jumpy—I get that way sometimes.'

Then, with a smile:

'Tell me all about the horses you're buying. Have you made a start...'

She heard the insistent tinkle of the telephone in the pantry, but before she could get up he was out of the room. When he returned there was a frown on his forehead.

'It was Lane,' he said. 'As he was dressing he saw two men canter past his house. He recognised one as Goodie, and the other was probably Goodie's house man, the Spaniard. He said they came from the direction of Gillywood Cottage and they were evidently in a hurry. Goodie had a lamp; he put it out opposite Lane's cottage. Apparently the girth of Manuel's saddle had slipped, for they stopped and he dismounted to fasten it. After that they went flying up the road towards Gareham.'

Ten minutes later Lane presented himself at the house and was brought into the dining-room.

'I saw Goodie quite plainly,' he said. 'I won't swear to the other fellow, but he was a fairly fat man. But I could tell Goodie's hack in the dark—a grey Basuto pony.'

Luke nodded.

'Get back where you can watch Gillywood Cottage and report when they return. Don't let them see you.'

Lane went out, stopping only to swallow the hot coffee which the girl had given him.

'It's all very exciting and mysterious,' she said, 'but what does it mean?'

'That's what I'd like to know,' answered Luke with a troubled look in his face. 'This is the worst hour in the day for guessing.'

There was a room on the top floor at the gabled end of the house which commanded a view of the road along which Goodie had gone, and also a fairly comprehensive view of the eastern downs. Fortunately, it was unoccupied, and from this post of observation Luke kept watch. The field glasses he borrowed from the girl were fairly useless, for the night was completely dark.

He had been watching for three-quarters of an hour when Elizabeth, whom he had left below, came up to him, bringing some fresh coffee.

'Did you see anything?'

'Nothing,' he said.

He had hardly spoken the word when, far away on a shoulder of the downs, he saw the flicker of a light. It lasted for a full minute and then went out.

'What's that? It can't be a car: there's no road there,' she said.

'You know the country around here pretty well—where would that be?'

She mentally constructed a rough map of the surrounding country.

'That must be somewhere near what they call here the east cave. There's a legend about here that it's connected with Perrywig Caves, but nobody has ever found a way through. The entrance has been closed with a light fence by the Urban District Council—sheep get in there and are lost. And—look!'

The light had appeared again, and he focussed his glasses on it. He could see no more than that it was stationary, had probably been placed on the ground. It was

impossible to see by its light any human figure, even through the powerful glasses. Presently it went out, and when it appeared again it was some distance from the place where it had originally appeared.

'He's going towards the road,' said Luke. 'I presume he's coming back.'

It was long past four o'clock when the sound of horses' hoofs on the road came to him. By this time Luke had taken a post of observation whence he could see without betraying his presence.

The sound of the hoofs came louder and louder through the hiss of the rain, and then the horsemen passed, their horses at a walk. He could just distinguish Goodie, who rode just a little ahead of his companion, his chin on his chest, a characteristic pose of his when he was riding.

Luke went back to the dining-room, slipping off his wet waterproof in the hall.

'I'll wait till daylight and then I'll borrow one of your horses and do a little investigating myself,' he said. 'Something important must have happened—I wonder if a horse has broken loose?'

She nodded.

'That occurred to me. One of Mr. Goodie's horses got out of the stable last week; it took the whole day to find him.'

He suggested that she should go to bed, but she scoffed at the idea.

A quarter of an hour after Luke had settled down to wait for daylight, Lane came to make his report. Goodie's car had left in the direction of London. Goodie was driving himself and Manuel had closed the gates behind him.

'Then it isn't a horse that's got loose—something much more important than that,' said Luke.

'Shall you go back to London?' asked the girl.

He shook his head.

'No, this is the centre for an hour or two at any rate.'

Just before six the horses were brought round. Elizabeth suggested she should ride with him, and as the rain had ceased she could do so without discomfort. Banks of cloud obscured the sky and the light was still bad when they set out. They followed the road until she indicated a gap in a ragged hedge which fringed the road. Horses had passed through the gap before; they could see the marks of their hoofs coming and going, and could follow the direction that Goodie had taken, until they struck the grassland, where no traces were left.

The general direction that Goodie and his companion had followed was towards the little cave. She pointed out its position with her riding whip. Another proof that they were on Goodie's trail came when they struck the corner of a cultivated patch, part of some farm land, where the hoof marks were so clear that they could be read at a distance from the saddle.

The entrance of the cave was invisible, though the light was better. It lay behind a little hillock in the hollow between this and the downs proper. It was so small that the entrance would have taken him some time to find. It was about five feet high and little more than a yard broad.

'The gates are pulled down!' she said.

It was a flimsy affair, made of thin stakes wired together, and it hung drunkenly from one of the hooks on which it had been fastened. Obviously it had never been intended to use these gates at all. There were no hinges;

it had been secured at four places to the rocky wall of the entrance by iron staples, one of which was broken off. The fractured staple was an object of great interest to Luke who examined it carefully, and dragged it back to fit the fractured end which still remained in the wall.

Climbing past the obstruction, he made a careful scrutiny of the rocky floor of the cave, picking up one stone after another until he found a piece of rock which he carried out into the light of day.

With the aid of a torch he made a superficial examination of the rest of the cave. The farther it went the lower sank the roof, until it was impossible to stand upright and he was forced to crawl on hands and knees under rocky shelves, until the difficulty of the way made him retrace his steps.

He came out to find an anxious Elizabeth peering through the aperture of the cave, and realised that his inspection must have taken longer than he thought. It was not easy to replace the broken gate, for the thick strands of wire that bound the stakes together required considerable strength to twist them into their original shape.

They rode back to the house, and Luke was so pre-occupied that he scarcely spoke a word. After he had sent Elizabeth's chauffeur to the inn for his car:

'Have you got a private extension to your phone other than the one in the hall, or is that the only instrument in the house?' he asked.

She had an extension to her sitting-room. He went there, closed the door behind him, and for half an hour was a very busy man.

He found her in the hall, standing by the open door, looking out upon the dreary garden, for rain was falling again.

‘What is it?’ she asked quietly. ‘There’s something very wrong. Can you give me a hint?’

He shook his head.

‘I’m only guessing, and I may be guessing wrong,’ he said. He thought a moment, then: ‘I’m bringing a man down here; he’ll be staying with Lane. I tell you this in case you see a stranger with a not particularly prepossessing face. Do you remember a man who spoke to me at Doncaster, a shabby gentleman named Markham—Punch Markham?’

She nodded.

‘I want him down here to keep an eye on Goodie’s horses. He’s rather a talkative person, and I’ve given instructions that he’s not to come anywhere near you or bore you with stories of his past triumphs and his vanished wealth! What I want you to do, if you will, is to allow him to use your telephone. There isn’t one anywhere near here, and it may be necessary for him to get in touch with me.’

He drew on his raincoat, which the butler had dried in the kitchen, went into the dining-room and brought out the little volume of poems.

‘I’ll take this with me if you don’t mind. By the way, when Garcia came here, the first time you visited the house, did he carry this book in his pocket?’

She thought.

‘It’s quite likely. He was very attached to it. I know that, because Mr. Garcia was rather a careless man, and once, when he lost the book, advertised an extravagant reward for it—don’t you remember? It happened on the ship.’

He did not recall the incident, but at that time he was not so much interested in Elizabeth Gray and her friend

as he was at the moment.

'As I say, you'll find Punch rather a bore,' he said at parting, 'but I've told Lane to keep him away from you as much as possible. By the way, can you mount him?'

She could do this without inconvenience, for she had two hacks and a couple of hunters in her stable.

'You'll find him useful,' he said, when she told him this. 'He's a wonderful horseman and he'll keep your fat beasts from getting too fresh. In that case don't hesitate to use him—let him take your horses out for exercise. That, I think, would be an excellent idea. You can fix it with your groom.'

Luke was in London before lunch and went straight to his office. He found the two detectives he had asked for waiting, and gave them instructions. By three o'clock that afternoon he had his news bulletin from Gillywood. Goodie's car had returned from London, or whatever had been its destination and, an hour after its arrival, a closed car had come pelting down the road and turned into the entrance of Gillywood Cottage. Lane, the watcher, had seen its occupant—Dr. Blanter. The doctor had stayed for two hours and had gone back the way he came. At midday a second car turned into the drive, and again its occupant had been recognised, or at least it had been possible to furnish a description which enabled Mr. Luke to place him. This time it was Rustem. His visit was briefer, and when he went away, according to Luke he was looking very worried. Something was agitating the gang, but apparently nothing had happened which called for the attention of the placid Trigger.

More than ever Luke was convinced that Trigger was the operator and no more. He would be fully occupied.

The Green Ribbon Agency was departing from all its traditions. A hurry-up call had gone to every subscriber, and one of the notes sent out by the systematic Joseph found its way that evening into Luke's hands. It ran:

'It is the usual practice of the Green Ribbon Agency that Trigger's Transactions should be few and far between. Hitherto we have not sent out more than eight or nine horses in the course of a year. There are circumstances which make it necessary, in the interests of our clients, that that number should be increased. We have information about half a dozen horses which cannot fail to win, and especially do we urge clients again to increase the number of their bookmakers with the object of having a special bet on the Cambridgeshire. We remind clients that even bookmakers who have closed their accounts will be willing to lay a horse two or three days before this race, believing they can cover themselves at the last. The next Trigger Transaction runs almost immediately. Clients who have not sent their addressed telegram forms and postal orders should forward them without the slightest delay.'

Why was the Green Ribbon overcrowding itself at this moment? To Luke's mind there was only one explanation: Blanter and his friends intended rushing as many Transactions into the remaining months of the season as they could handle. They were doing this because something had scared them. They foresaw the end of their operations.

5

This in fact was what had happened. Dr. Blanter met the little 'organiser of victory', as he sometimes described himself, at their favourite Wardour Street restaurant.

'You're asking for trouble, Doctor. We can't handle a horse a week, or a horse a fortnight. You're killing the goose that lays the golden eggs, and that's a fact.'

'We've got to do it,' growled Blanter. 'I want to get the money in, and I've got the horses to do it with.'

The little man shook his head glumly.

'There's only one way we've ever made money, Doctor,' he said, 'and that's by being patient. I don't know much about racing, but from what I've heard half the fellows go broke at the game because they won't wait. I've got to work the staff day and night to get out a horse a week.'

'Well, work 'em day and night,' snapped the doctor. 'And don't try to rattle me, because I've enough worry without yours.'

Trigger smiled.

'I've got no worry,' he said. 'I've got more money than I'll ever spend, and nothing that you can do will scare me. I told Luke the other day . . .'

'Has he been to see you?' asked Blanter quickly. 'Why the hell didn't you tell me?'

‘Because it wasn’t worth talking about,’ said Trigger coolly.

He gave a brief account of Luke’s visit, and Blanter’s suspicious eyes never left his face.

‘Is that all that happened?’ he asked. ‘You’re not keeping anything back, are you? I’ll tell you this—I don’t completely trust you, Trigger.’

Again the little man smiled.

‘You trust me with your money. I’ve got an idea, Doctor, that if you trust a man with your money you’d trust him with your soul! No, there’s nothing underhand about me. I’ve told you all he said, and all I told him. I’ve done as much for the sporting papers and shown them round the premises. In fact, I’m quite ready to give them the run of the office. There’s nothing I do that isn’t gentlemanly and straightforward.’

Blanter scowled at him.

‘You think that if it comes to a fight you’re out of it, do you?’ he demanded. ‘Well, get that idea out of your thick head. You’ve made money, out of everything we’ve done; we’ve trusted you to handle our money, and we’ve taken your word that the share you’ve passed on to us is all we’re entitled to. If there’s any kind of trouble, Trigger, you’re in it, and I’ll damn well see that you’re in it! So don’t get any silly ideas about being safe and gentlemanly.’

Trigger looked at him with round-eyed interest, but said nothing; he was apparently impervious both to insult and suspicion. His early troubles had perhaps inured him to both. Certainly he showed not the least evidence of antagonism in the course of that interview.

Presently they began to talk business.

‘I shall want thirty thousand pounds. Lord Lath-

field's stud is for disposal, and I think we can get something out of it,' said the doctor.

To his amazement, Trigger shook his head.

'Listen, Doctor; we're running this plant on sound lines. You and the others draw what you want, but we've always made it a rule that no big sums are to be paid out till the end of the season.'

The doctor's face went red with anger.

'If I make a rule I can break it, can't I?'

'You didn't make the rule,' said the other coolly. 'We all made it. It was Rustem's suggestion, and Goodie agreed. We'll have a board meeting if you like, but I'm not handing over thirty thousand pounds on my own responsibility—stud or no stud.'

He drank his unfinished glass of Vichy and rose.

'I've got some work to do,' he said, and left abruptly.

It was the first sign of revolt, and it sobered the doctor. He went home and got Rustem on the telephone, and the ex-lawyer obeyed the summons he received with every sign of reluctance. He put down the phone and rang the bell for his clerk.

'I'm going round to see the doctor, and if anybody wants me tell them I'll be back at five.'

Pilcher pulled a face.

'I had a date at five,' he complained.

'Put her off,' said Mr. Rustem coldly.

His interview with Dr. Blanter could not have been a pleasant one: he came back, ruffled and in an unusually bad temper.

Blanter was the big mind of the organisation; but Rustem was the more subtle. He had an animal-like instinct for danger, saw signs which were not visible even to the man who inspired his apprehension. The doctor had set

him an impossible, a ridiculous task; and Rustem had said as much, without being relieved from the duty which had been imposed on him.

He dismissed Pilcher and put through a telephone call to Munich. The man he sought was not there, and he had to sit, fuming with rage, for two hours, till, on his third call, his object was achieved. He spoke for twelve minutes, and he spoke in French, for his correspondent was an Alsatian, who had found the return to liberty of his native land a little irksome, and had removed to a less tyrannical atmosphere, where he could live his life without the irritating attentions of the French police.

It was nearly nine o'clock when his telephoning was finished. Mr. Rustem went home and ate a leisurely meal, waiting for the evening to pass. At half-past eleven he telephoned Elizabeth Gray. Elizabeth's voice answered him, and she sounded anxious.

'Is that Fräulein Gray?' He spoke thickly, with a tolerably good imitation of a German speaking a foreign language. 'I am Dr. Thaler. I have just come from Munich. Have you heard from my poor friend Garcia?'

'Yes,' said Elizabeth. 'I've just had a telegram from him. Is he very ill?'

'I fear desperately,' said Rustem. 'As we would say . . .' He said something in German which was unintelligible to the girl. 'I would like to see you, but unfortunately I must leave London by the night train for Ireland. He is anxious that nobody but yourself should know of his illness.'

'Is there any hope?' she asked, with a catch in her voice.

'I fear not,' said Rustem. 'A week, perhaps two . . .

he is not a young man. I have arranged that my brother shall meet you at the station.'

'I will leave by the first train in the morning,' she said.

When Mr. Rustem came away from the telephone he looked less worried. He went to report personally to Dr. Blanter, and discovered that the doctor had left in a very great hurry for the country.

Elizabeth read the telegram again; it had been handed it at Munich.

'Am very ill. Dr. Thaler, who is going to London, will call you up. Please come and see me at once, and I beg of you not to let anybody know you are coming—this is most important, for I have a great secret to tell you—Alberto.'

He gave the name of the principal hotel in Munich.

She made preparations to leave early in the morning, but by the time she had summoned her chauffeur to give instructions she had changed her mind. She would go to London and sleep there—it would be less fatiguing, starting out in the morning on her long journey.

Her maid packed a suitcase hastily while the butler telephoned to the hotel to reserve a room. She left an hour after midnight, very wide awake.

She reached London in the early hours of the morning, and was glad to get to bed. The night porter at the hotel had arranged to get her ticket, and at half-past ten she was at Victoria station, superintending the registration of her luggage.

'Wither away?'

She recognised the voice and spun round. Mark Luke was gazing at her very sombrely. He looked tired, and

he was entitled to, for he had had less than three hours' sleep on the previous night.

'I'm going abroad,' she said, 'to Munich.'

'So the labels tell me,' he said, politely. 'This is rather unexpected, isn't it?'

She hesitated.

'Yes—I do unexpected things. I thought you'd discovered that.'

'Did Mr. Garcia send for you?' he asked, and she looked up at him quickly.

'Yes.'

'Is he ill? I mean, is it a very urgent matter?'

She sighed impatiently.

'You're making me break a promise . . .'

'You were asked to tell nobody you were leaving?' His voice was sharp and commanding. 'Don't get annoyed with me. I'm most anxious to know all the particulars about your visit to Germany.'

'Am I under police surveillance?'

'For the moment you are.' His manner was brusque to the point of rudeness, but she was not offended, for some reason which she could not explain to herself.

'I had a telegram from Mr. Garcia last night; he's very ill and asked me to go over and see him. The German doctor, who came to London last night, called me up . . .'

'At what time?'

'About half-past eleven,' she said.

He nodded.

'Can you remember what the cable said?'

She told him as nearly as she could remember.

A porter came to remove the luggage, but Luke checked him.

'Wait a moment.'

He led the girl out of the hearing of the passengers and the crowd of porters.

'I want to ask you, as a very great favour, not to go to Germany,' he said.

'Why not?' she asked.

'I can't afford the time to go with you, and I haven't another man at hand. Don't tell me it's not necessary I should go. I'm asking you as a very great favour.'

'But Mr. Garcia ...'

'I promise you Mr. Garcia shall be looked after, and if it really is necessary you can fly this evening. It only makes a few hours' difference.'

He was so earnest, so insistent, that she could not deny him. He drove back with her to the hotel and told her just where his theories had led him. When, on the top of this, he suggested she should go to Kempton with him that day, it seemed the most callous and cold-blooded proposition she had ever heard.

'I want you to go to Kempton for several reasons,' he interrupted her objections. 'In the first place, it is necessary you should be seen with me today of all days; in the second place, I want to see if two of my friends will be present. And I particularly want to be with you today.'

She smiled.

'I won't take that as a compliment.'

'Don't,' he said.

When he came to the hotel for her he was in holiday mood. The rain had cleared off; it was a glorious autumn day, with a nip in the air, and she could almost forget the worry and bewilderment of the morning, and her anxiety over Garcia's illness. She was very fond of the old man, yet between youth and age there cannot be that

absorbing friendship which colours life and all that makes up life.

They parked their car near the entrance, and he led her down on to the lawn. It was early for racing, and there was only a sprinkling of people. The men he sought were not there, but he saw them three minutes later in the Paddock: Goodie and the doctor, head to head, with Rustem an almost detached third. They were in the far corner of the paddock when Luke sighted them, and from the shelter of the stand by the parade ring he fixed his glasses on the trio. The trainer and the big doctor were talking intently; they were gestureless, earnest, seemingly unperturbed.

It was Rustem who supplied the clue to the importance of that conference. He paced restlessly from side to side, his hands now in his pockets, now behind his back. Luke could see his face only occasionally, and even then his glasses only gave him a hint of the man's agitation.

'You came up last night, didn't you? I didn't know you were in London till I rang up your house early this morning.'

'I'm still worried about Mr. Garcia, and if he wanted me ...'

'He didn't,' said Luke promptly. 'He's not in Munich. I've been on to the police; the luggage you sent out is still at an agency and hasn't been sent for.'

'But Dr. Thaler ...'

He shook his head.

'I don't believe in that Dr. Thaler. For some reason they wanted you to go to Munich, and I can pretty well guess what that reason was. I don't know whether Mr. Garcia is ill or well, whether he's in Istanbul or Vienna, but he's certainly not in Munich.'

'He *was* there,' she insisted, but he evaded the challenge.

'I don't know. There are some things about this business I don't like very much. Here's the first horse in the ring: you ought to back it.'

He pointed to a big chestnut, walking sedately behind his attendant through the parade ring, and consulted his card.

'Ginny—who's Ginny? That's one of the trainers I don't know.'

A passing friend elucidated the mystery. Mr. Ginny was Irish, one of two brothers; one had his stable in Ireland, the other in the north of England. Luke made a closer inspection of the big chestnut as he walked round the ring. It was a three-year-old, and three-year-olds were in the majority amongst Trigger's Transactions.

He left Elizabeth standing by the ring and went in search of information, returning just as the jockeys were beginning to mount.

'Do you back horses?' he asked her in his abrupt way. 'If you don't know a bookmaker I'll introduce you to a few and you can make a lot of money—I wouldn't suggest it, but I know you can afford to lose a little.'

He took her back to the ring, and under his instructions she backed Red Dahlia to win her £500.

'Which is Red Dahlia?' she asked, bewildered.

He explained that it was the chestnut.

'I'm pretty certain this is a Transaction—in fact, so certain that I'm going to pass the word along. I'm rather curious to see what happens. This horse has never run before; it's a three-year-old weight-for-age selling plate, and he gets an allowance because he's never won a race. Nobody knows whether the horse is trained by the Eng-

lish Ginny or the Irish Ginny and I've just met a man who swears that he's seen the horse working on the Curragh.'

As the horses galloped down to the post, Luke went and whispered the warning. In two minutes a 10—1 chance had dropped to 6—4. He had his reward when he saw the doctor stroll into the ring. Apparently the cry of 'Six to four the field' had no significance for him. He went up to the nearest bookmaker, and Luke moved to within earshot.

'What do you bar?' he asked.

'Red Dahlia,' said the bookmaker, and the doctor's jaw dropped.

'Six to four?' he squeaked incredulously.

Then, turning, he met Luke with unamused gaze.

'Is this your little joke, Luke?' he asked.

'My little joke,' nodded the detective. 'Doctor, you're losing your nerve—that's the first time you've ever given it away that you're in on the Transactions—Red Dahlia is one of them, isn't it?'

The big man was quivering with rage, could find no speech. He swung round, muttering something under his breath, and pushed his way through the crowd that was gathering at the rails.

'You're a lucky woman,' said Luke when he joined the girl on the stone stand of the lawn. 'You've got ten to one about a horse that will start at odds on.'

He was no mean prophet. Before the gate went up, Red Dahlia was unbackable. He did not get too well away, but his rider did not bustle him; he went forward readily when he was called upon, and at the turn into the straight lay third. His jockey took no chances; although a tempting opening was made for him, he declined the invitation,

well knowing that it was one of the tricks of race-riding for jockeys to offer an opening and close on the innocent who accepts it. He took his place on the outside, and two furlongs from home, though he was lying third, it was any odds on his winning. At the distance he moved forward with the greatest ease and, galloping down the leaders, won in a canter by three lengths.

By the rules of the race he had to be sold after winning, and Luke joined the throng about the sale ring. He expected the colt to fetch a big price, but was quite unprepared for the figure it reached. It was not till Goodie had nodded his head to the auctioneer and brought the price up to 2,800 guineas that the hammer fell.

'That will take a little of the gilt off the gingerbread,' said Luke. 'I'm sorry for his punters, but I particularly want to rattle the gang at this moment. That horse is probably worth five thousand guineas. It isn't often Goodie bids for successful platers, and I presume he's going to take him down to Gillywood.'

As they drove from the course they saw the doctor's big car turn in the opposite direction. He was alone; Goodie had probably gone before him, for he never stayed on any course after the horse in which he was interested had run.

'Now, young lady, I don't know what to do with you.'

'I think I'll go back to Longhall,' she said.

He agreed to this.

'It's easier to keep an eye on you at Longhall than it is in London,' he admitted, and she looked at him open-eyed.

'Why is it necessary to keep an eye on me at all? Do you imagine that something dreadful is going to happen to me?'

He scratched his nose irritably.

'I'm blest if I know. If I could only be sure of one thing—I've been trying to puzzle out all the secrets of this case, if it is a case. Why they were so anxious that you shouldn't go to Longhall isn't much of a mystery. Goodie didn't wish to be overlooked—do you realise the isolation of his gallops, that nobody else but you and I ride upon those downs? But it's the other thing that puzzles me—Mr. Garcia's book, and those telegrams from Germany, which may be genuine and may be a fake.'

'You've got a suspicious mind,' she said.

He nodded.

'You mean I think the worst? I suppose I do.'

'What's the worst you think of me?' she was bold to ask, and he looked at her steadily.

'The worst I think of you is that you're worried sometimes whether I shall overstep the little barrier between us and make love to you. But worse than that, you sometimes wonder whether the fact that you are a lady with a quarter of a million of money doesn't weigh with me.'

He saw the colour come into her face and chuckled.

'I got home there!' he said.

'The money part of it, no; the other part, yes,' she said defiantly; 'and I'm sorry I drove back with you—you're very unpleasant.'

'You'll either have to drive me back or leave me to walk,' he said good-humouredly, and changed the subject. 'I'm keeping an eye on you because evidently you're considered an important person, if all I believe about Blanter is justified. This attempt to get you to go to Germany—well, there may be anything behind that. The whole thing was obviously organised. Dr. Thaler, who called you up, and who was probably our dear friend

Rustem—he speaks German like a native—arranged the cables. I'm having a search made for the original of the telegram that came to you.'

He was surprised that she accepted the idea of police supervision without protest. He never would have made the suggestion but for the Munich cable. It was as clear as daylight that they wanted her out of the way. Whether they contemplated anything more sinister than a wild-goose chase across Europe on the trail of a will-o-the-wisp Garcia, he did not dare to think.

He saw her off from her hotel, and arranged to take her to the Cesarewitch on the following Wednesday. This time the car carried an extra passenger seated by the chauffeur; a singularly wide-awake Scotland Yard man.

Luke had plenty of work that night. It confirmed what had amounted to a certainty in his mind, that Red Dahlia was a Transaction. On the night Trigger sent out his horses his staff worked overtime, and when Luke passed up Lower Regent Street that night he saw that the green shades were drawn down, and that the main office was a blaze of light. He had other sources of information, however, and they reported before nine that they had received the usual telegrams and that the horse had won.

They were remarkable people, these clients of the Green Ribbon: retired officers, men occupying good positions in the City and in the services; doctors, lawyers, almost every profession was represented on the secret book of clients which Mr. Trigger kept in his safe. There was behind Trigger's Transactions a curiously solid and stolid army of respectability and unimpeachable integrity, and that was the strength of the little man's position. In the first place, they were extraordinarily reticent, none of them proclaiming openly that he owed a sensible

proportion of his income to systematic betting. Trigger, moreover, imposed a vow of secrecy on his clients.

From Punch Markham, now installed in Berkshire, he received a great deal of information which did not interest him, and a few items which did. Punch had thrown himself into his work with the greatest enthusiasm. He not only touted Goodie's horses, but did a little private spying on Goodie himself. He also had a private grievance, which he came to London to ventilate.

'Look at this, Mr. Luke!' 'This' was a discoloured eye, and the little man was tremulous with wrath. 'That's not the way to treat a man. Goodie's head lad done it! I admit that nobody wants their horses touted, but there's a gentlemanly way of getting rid of them.'

He had gone up to see a gallop, having heard a whisper that Field of Glory was to be tried. As a matter of precaution he had literally dug himself in, enlarging a hollow which he had found on the downs, from which he could observe the horses. Before they arrived, however, two men appeared, and it was obvious to Punch that they were searching the gallop for an unofficial observer. When they were close on him he tried to bolt, but they caught him. One of the riders, whom he described as a big man, and whom Luke had no difficulty in recognising from the description as Manuel, had galloped after him and, stooping as he came up with his quarry, had lifted Punch bodily from the ground with one hand and hit him with the other.

'Goodie's got something up his sleeve, I'll bet you,' said Punch; 'and my own opinion is that he's sent Field of Glory away to be tried somewhere else. And if he wins the Cambridgeshire I'll eat him! He was a good

colt—there ain't a bad Blandford—but he broke down as a yearling, and I had to patch him up to sell him. You can take it from me, Mr. Luke, that that horse won't win no Cambridgeshire. Why old Goodie's being so careful I don't know. But that Goodie couldn't be open and above-board, not if he tried! If I could only get into the stable . . .'

'You'd hear nothing,' said Luke. 'None of the boys speaks English.'

But the little man was not satisfied, and his enthusiasm for discovery was unabated. Luke did his best to damp that enthusiasm, for nothing is quite so dangerous as a zealous amateur detective.

The detective was leaving his office soon after six that night, had closed down his desk and was putting on his overcoat when he heard a knock at the door. He was alone in the office; his clerk had left half an hour earlier, and his chief assistant was away in the country, following the veriest hint of a clue. Luke looked round; the knocking was repeated. It was an agitated knock; somebody was in a hurry.

'Come in.'

The door opened and a man came in, closing it behind him. It was Rustem; his face was the colour of dirty chalk, and the hand he held out to Luke was trembling. For the first time since he had known him, Mr. Arthur Rustem had the appearance of untidiness. He looked as if he had been sleeping in his clothes all day.

'What the devil's the matter with you?' asked Luke in astonishment.

The ex-lawyer forced a smile.

'I'm not particularly well—nerves, old boy.' His voice quivered.

'Sit down. Are you poisoned or something?'

'That's a good joke—ha, ha!' Mr. Rustem's voice was hollow, his laugh entirely mirthless. 'No, nerves—just nerves. People been following me about . . .'

'That sounds like an incipient stage of lunacy,' said Luke with a smile.

'What are you doing tonight, Luke? I mean couldn't we have a chat together about various oddments? I'll tell you candidly, I'm all shot to pieces.'

'Have you been hitting the hop?' asked Luke coarsely, and Rustem shook his head with great vigour.

'No, no. Dope? Good God, no! I haven't come to that, old boy. It's nerves, that's all. I wondered if we could go out and have a bit of dinner somewhere and have a little chat. There's another thing I wanted to see you about. I hear the Police Orphanage is in want of funds, and I wondered if they'd accept a thousand pounds . . .'

Luke shook his head.

'Leave it in your will,' he suggested. 'It's much better and less embarrassing. No, we don't want money at the moment—at least, I'd rather you didn't give it. What's the matter, Rustem—conscience?'

The lawyer jumped to his feet.

'No,' he said loudly. 'Conscience? What have I got to worry about? Naturally I've done a lot of things that I probably wouldn't do again if I saw as clearly as I do at the moment.'

Luke thought quickly.

'All right, come along and dine—as a great concession I'll allow you to pay for the dinner.'

There was something wrong, and very wrong indeed. The man literally clung to him as they went down on to

the Embankment; and all the way to Soho he kept up an incessant chatter of conversation about nothing that really mattered. He was not wholly coherent; sometimes his speech sounded like a badly worded telegram without punctuation, and was quite as incomprehensible.

Luke was alert. Something had happened, and something very important; and he realised, before the dinner was half through, that Rustem had nothing to say that was of the slightest moment.

He lingered over dinner, trying to make the meal last as long as possible until, from sheer compassion, Luke suggested he should accompany him the rounds of the little clubs.

‘It will do you no good being seen with me, otherwise I shouldn’t suggest your coming,’ he said candidly. ‘Your disreputable friends will think that you’re putting up a squeak. Heaven knows, there’s no man in London who can squeak more effectively than you.’

But the opinion of his sometime clients did not seem to weigh very much.

It was in the little club where they had met before that they happened upon the important Mr. Trigger. He was sitting in the identical alcove where Rustem had been discovered, and before him was a glass of colourless liquid. He smiled genially at Luke, but did not smile at all at the detective’s companion.

‘Sit down, won’t you, and have a drink? I’m drinking tonic water myself, and I suppose that gives you a laugh. I don’t drink hard liquor.’

He shot a swift, sidelong glance at Rustem.

‘It would be a good idea if some of my friends followed my example,’ he said.

Rustem was frankly knocked off his balance at this

meeting with his partner, and had not even the enterprise to protest against the innuendo.

'If I didn't come over here for a little recreation,' Trigger went on, 'I think I'd go potty!'

'And when you say "recreation" you mean tonic water?' smiled Luke.

He liked this little man, found in him an amusing foil to the more sinister side of his organisation.

'Tonic water and watching people,' said Mr. Trigger. 'There are more crooks come here than you'll meet at the Old Bailey, Mr. Luke.'

Again that swift sidelong flash of his round, blue eyes towards Rustem.

'You a member, Mr. Luke? Then you and me are the only two honest ones! Not that I have to come to this club to meet crooks: I meet one or two at board meetings occasionally.'

This time the challenge could not pass.

'If you mean me . . .' snarled Rustem.

'If there's anybody else you can think of I'd be glad to hear you name 'em!' said the little man calmly.

Suddenly he shifted round in his seat to face his angry associate.

'I'm telling you—and I'm saying it before Mr. Luke—that at my board meetings I don't want to discuss anything that's not business; and business with me is money and telegrams and organisation. If I get a horse from a reliable source I send it out to my clients. I don't want to know nothing about that horse, except that he's got four legs and a head that he can get in front of all the other horses when they're passing the post. I don't want to know what makes him put his head in front, and I don't allow anybody at my board meetings to tell me.

I wouldn't have my name associated with anything that's dirty, underhand, or unsporting.'

Dimly Luke visualised the scene which had provoked this outburst. There must have been a meeting that day and somebody, probably Rustem, had begun to discuss matters which were outside the actual business for which they had met; and this little man had silenced the discussion, and had in all likelihood crushed Blanter.

'You're a hell of an honest man!' snapped Rustem.

J. P. Trigger smiled.

'I'm better than honest, I'm safe,' he said, and in the sentence he epitomised his philosophy.

He finished his tonic water, paid the waiter double the amount he was asked for, and got up.

'I'll leave you two gentlemen: you've probably got something to talk about,' he said politely and without sarcasm. 'But I'll tell you this, Mr. Luke. If that man'—he pointed a podgy finger at the scowling Rustem—'says that I know anything about anything except business, he's a liar. Not that I'm afraid of him squeaking'—Luke thought it rather inconsistent that he should suggest there was anything to squeak about—'he's too yellow to let go of the tiger's tail. I can be safe, but he can't be, because he knows.'

On this cryptic note the great J. P. Trigger waddled out of the club, his bowler hat set at a rakish angle over one eye, a large cigar stuck at an angle in one corner of his mouth.

'Tricky little swine!' growled Rustem. 'That a gutter-bred brute like that should talk . . .'

He checked himself, as he had checked himself a dozen times that evening. The fear of revelation, and the fear of all the consequences which might follow silence, bat-

tled for decision. Arthur Rustem, who for ten years had dominated the criminal world, was not the Arthur Rustem Luke had known. He was cowed and frightened, and with good reason, for the ruler was now ruled: he had surrendered his independence to a stronger will, and had not the courage to break with the man who threatened to destroy him. Luke made several ineffectual efforts to bring him to the subject of Dr. Blanter; he even recounted casually certain lurid stories of the doctor's past. It was unnecessary, since Rustem knew much more than the detective, and had defended him on his one appearance in court.

Luke did not get rid of his companion till nearly eleven o'clock. Rustem staggered a little when he reached the open air, but pulled himself together and, taking formal leave of the detective, turned into Wardour Street. He had not gone far when a car drew slowly up to the kerb, keeping pace with him, and then he heard a voice call him. He looked round in a fright, and saw the red face of Blanter's servant, who was driving the car.

'Step in—the governor wants you,' he called hoarsely.

Rustem hesitated but obeyed. The car drove quietly along Coventry Street and into Haymarket—which was not in the direction of Half Moon Street. Through the Admiralty Arch into the Mall they passed, and then the car drew up and the driver stepped to the sidewalk.

'Don't get out—I want to talk,' he said.

Rustem thrust his head and shoulders through the window opening.

'That's for luck,' said the man, and slashed him across his bare head with a rubber truncheon.

Rustem never remembered what happened between this and his awakening in Perrywig Cave.

Luke went back to his office at Scotland Yard to read the telegrams which had arrived in his absence but there was nothing which interested him quite so much as a telephone message which had come through from Punch. It ran :

‘Have got the whole strength of the story. Must see you at eleven o’clock tomorrow. Will try to get you at your house at half-past ten.’

It might easily be that, in his eagerness, Punch had got hold of the wrong story altogether. On the other hand, the man had an instinct for news of a certain kind. What the ‘story’ was and who it concerned, Luke could only guess. He phoned through to Lane, but Lane could give him no information.

‘He’s been out since nine. He’s got something very hot, but he won’t tell me what it is. I think it must be about Goodie.’

Big Ben was striking midnight when Luke turned out of his office and walked slowly towards his home. There was reason for the leisure, for the first of the fogs had descended on London and, though it was not thick, it was sufficiently dense to make the finding of a taxi a difficult business. In Trafalgar Square, however, he found a cab crawling by the side of the kerb and, since he was tired and admittedly lazy, he overruled the driver’s fears and crawled along Pall Mall and into Piccadilly. At Hyde Park Corner the fog was, as he anticipated, a little more dense, and he paid off the taxi driver and started to walk. At Knightsbridge the fog was so thick that the street lamps were represented by a lighter type of fog.

Turning into the little street where he lived, he felt

along the railings till he came to his house. Taking out his key, he felt for the keyhole. To his amazement, his fingers touched nothing. The door was wide open and, when he had closed it behind him and switched on the light, the passage was blurred with a yellow mist.

His study was in the back room; the door of this also was open. Putting out his hand, he switched on the light. There was no sound or hint of movement and, as the light threw no menacing shadows, he changed his automatic from his left to his right hand, pushed open the door still farther and stepped in.

The room was empty except . . .

There was a long divan near the window, and on this lay a man, covered by a rug. Luke stood looking for a long time before he approached the figure and gently drew back the rug that covered the head. He knew old Garcia, had met him on the boat, and recognised him instantly. He was wrapped in an overcoat and was fully dressed except for his shoes.

The dectective only needed to take one glance at the face. Garcia was dead.

He went to the table and lifted the telephone receiver. There was no sound, and when he went out to make an examination in the passage, he found that the wires had been neatly cut.

Luke made a quick scrutiny of the room. Nothing had been touched on his table; there was no evidence that any of the drawers had been disturbed. He left the house, closing the door behind him, and went in search of a policeman and a telephone booth. He found both at the same moment, and after he had phoned through to the local station and to headquarters he joined the constable and they returned to the house.

It was half an hour before the divisional surgeon and the local inspector arrived, and in that period the detective had made several important discoveries. He had found the dead man's shoes, neatly placed beneath the table, and a rough search of the body produced several scraps of evidence which had some bearing on the case.

The first of these was a folded copy of a German newspaper; it was dated two or three days previous. There was also a copy of a detective story such as travellers use to beguile their journey. In an inside pocket was a bill bearing the heading of a firm of watchmakers in Munich. There were no other documents, and the body bore no visible mark of violence.

It was not until the early hours of the morning that the police surgeon reported the result of his examinations. There were no marks of violence on the body, but on the left arm there were half a dozen small punctures such as a hypodermic needle might make.

'Did you find any kind of dope in his pocket?'

Luke shook his head.

'No.'

The contents of the pockets lay on the inspector's table at the police station: a watch, a cigarette-case, a pair of reading glasses in a case and about a thousand marks in German money.

'He's been dead at least six hours, and probably more,' said the surgeon. 'He hasn't the appearance of a drug addict—has he been under treatment?'

Luke told him as much as he knew of the dead man's immediate past.

He had thought of ringing up the girl and telling her what had happened, but there was no reason why he should wake her from her sleep with the ghastly news,

and he determined to go down himself the following morning and break it to her personally. Long before then, however, something happened which put Garcia's death out of his mind.

The fog had been terribly thick along the Embankment, and the City patrols had made their way with some difficulty along the deserted pavement which fringes the river. At twelve o'clock, almost at the moment Luke had been leaving Scotland Yard, a City police officer had heard the 'rap-rap' of an automatic and had groped across the dark roadway to discover the reason. He had met nobody, seen nothing; he reached the opposite sidewalk and began systematically to cover the ground. It was a considerable time before he located the reason. He saw a figure lying in the gutter.

Luke went to Scotland Yard to make a detailed report, and was met by the hall man.

'Do you know a man named Markham, Mr. Luke?'

'Punch Markham? Yes.'

'The City police have just found him on the Embankment—shot dead.'

Poor Punch had been shot at close quarters; his coat was singed by the flame of the explosion. The only thing found in his pockets that had been of any value to the City detectives was a small address book in which Luke's name had appeared.

Luke paid a hurried visit to the City, and for the second time that night interviewed the police surgeon.

'It's a pretty simple case,' said the official. 'Either of the shots would have killed him.'

'Was it self-inflicted?'

The surgeon shook his head.

'It couldn't have been from the position of the wounds. No, it's murder all right. A foggy night *and* the Thames Embankment were very favourable conditions.'

The only evidence immediately available was that of a street cleaner who had seen a man pacing up and down the pavement near the place where the body was found. He took very little notice of him and was unable to furnish any details, except that he wore a wrist watch and examined it by the light of a small torch. As a matter of fact, the street cleaner had thought he was a City detective, and that certain business premises were being watched that night.

Luke went home, changed his suit and, brewing himself some hot coffee, went out into the misty morning determined on a bold step. Detectives take many risks, none greater than the risk of offending important people and drawing upon themselves an official admonition.

Dr. Blanter might be called important; he had, at any rate, influential friends; and after its failure to secure a conviction against him Scotland Yard had moved warily, fearing always an outcry against persecution.

By the time he reached Half Moon Street the staff were up. One was shaking the dust from a mat at the door.

'The doctor's in bed, sir. I don't think I can disturb him.'

'Go up and tell him my name,' said Luke curtly.

He was shown into a small drawing-room and spent the moments of waiting profitably. His wait was not a long one: the doctor made his appearance within five minutes, very alert and wide awake.

'Do you want me, Luke?' he asked brusquely.

'Where were you last night? I want an account of your movements.'

Ordinarily this peremptory demand would have aroused the doctor to a fury, but instead he answered readily.

‘I was here all the evening. I went down to the country yesterday afternoon and got back to town late.’

‘What time did you go to bed?’

Blanter looked first at him and then at the ceiling.

‘About ten o’clock; it may have been a little later. Yes, I think it was half-past ten. I heard half-past ten chiming as I went up to my room.’

Luke fixed his grey eyes on the doctor’s.

‘Then why was it, when I called you up at ten minutes to ten, that your man told me you were out?’

He saw the bland smile on the doctor’s face, and knew he had made a mistake.

‘My dear fellow, my man couldn’t have said anything so stupid, because it was his night off and he didn’t return till this morning. I was alone in the house. Not an unusual experience: I’m told some of the most respectable people in London live entirely alone.’

‘I live entirely alone,’ said Luke. ‘I occasionally have visitors. I had two last night—one alive and one dead.’

The doctor raised his eyebrows.

‘Indeed,’ he said, with polite interest. ‘This isn’t another little bluff of yours, Mr. Luke?’

‘It’s not bluff, as you know. One alive and one dead. Alberto Garcia, with a few German newspapers, German money, and a bill or two in his pocket to give point to the story that he’s been in Germany and has been sending the telegrams sent by your agent. Within a few minutes after my discovery, somebody found a man called Punch Markham, dead in the gutter on the Thames Embankment. He had been shot by somebody who met him

by arrangement—it was obviously the same person who broke into my house. This poor devil had arranged to telephone me at half-past ten, and that was the hour when I was burgled.'

'It was also the hour I was going to bed,' sneered Blanter. And then, leaning forward across the table, his big face puckered into a frown: 'Come straight with this, Luke. Are you accusing me?'

'I'm suspecting you,' said Luke coolly.

'Why should I kill Garcia and this other man—I seem to have had a very busy evening yesterday!'

'The motive isn't very clear. If I can find the motive I shall find the murderer. Just remember that, will you, Blanter?'

He went out of the room and beckoned the man who was standing on the opposite side of the road before he returned to the doctor. 'What are you going to do?'

'I'm going to search your house.'

'Have you a warrant?'

Luke produced it.

The house was not much larger than Luke's own, and the search had not progressed far before certain unusual things were revealed. The rooms on the ground floor were more or less tidy and clean though there were layers of dust everywhere. Upstairs the rooms were almost unfurnished. The doctor's bedroom was reasonably comfortable, but the rest of the house was like a pigsty. He met and interrogated the valet-chauffeur: a big, broad-shouldered man who must have rivalled the doctor in his strength. He reeked of drink, and evidently was a very privileged person. Luke had heard of this factotum of the doctor's, knew that he had been in Blanter's service for five or six years.

The detectives were leaving after a fruitless search when, turning to him, Luke asked casually:

'It's a long time since you had cheese on Wednesday, isn't it?'

The man blinked, changed colour and stammered.

'Eh? I don't know what you mean, guv'nor.'

When they were clear of the house Luke was still grinning.

'I don't see the joke—I mean, about cheese on Wednesday,' said the other detective.

'I hope you never will,' said Luke. 'It's queer how people betray themselves over quite little things. The moment I saw that bird I knew he was an old lag, though I can't place him. He's not only an old lag, but he's been in Dartmoor. Some few years ago, when the diet wasn't as varied as it is today, convicts were given cheese on Wednesdays; and somehow you never forget what happened in prison.'

'Have you ever been in one?' asked the other.

'Only as a temporary visitor,' said Luke.

He could not find time to get to the country, and telephoned the girl, asking her to come up. When she arrived he went round to her hotel and broke the news to her.

'I think I can save you the grisly business of identifying poor Garcia—fortunately, he was on the boat with us and I knew him very well by sight.'

She was terribly shocked, wept a little, being human.

'I can't understand it,' she said, when she had recovered. 'Then he was in Germany all the time?'

Luke shook his head.

'No, he's not been in Germany at all.'

He had sent in search of Rustem, but Arthur Rustem was neither at his office nor at his expensive flat. There

was a possibility that he had gone abroad and instructions were sent to all the port officers to turn him back on the excuse of passport irregularity.

Elizabeth had only seen Punch once since she had been in residence. He had been living with Lane. She had loaned him a pony and she had seen him riding up to the downs, and on the occasion he had come to the house she had been out.

'I saw him yesterday morning again. He was riding very near the place where the horse was shot.'

'Where which horse was shot?' he asked, quickly.

She told him of her adventure in the dark, and he was greatly interested; he made her draw a plan showing the exact spot where the horse was buried.

He questioned her as to the date of the shooting, and she rang for her chauffeur. The chauffeur came, a methodical man with a large notebook which he used as a sort of diary, and definitely fixed the day, since on the following morning he had taken petrol and collected the abandoned car.

After the chauffeur had left Luke asked :

'Can you put me up for tonight? I don't think I want to go to the Red Lion. I'd like to go right away if you'll let me. I'm dead with tiredness, and if I could only sleep for an hour or two at Longhall, I think I might be able to go on for another thirty-six. I've got to be fresh and bright for Cambridgeshire day.'

She looked at him open-mouthed. 'You're not going to the races, with all these terrible things . . .'

'I certainly am going to the races,' he said, callously as it seemed to her. 'Field of Glory is a ten to one chance, and I particularly wish to see Mr. Goodie in the moment of its triumph.'

She shook her head.

'I don't understand it. I couldn't go. Poor Mr. Garcia! It's the most terrible tragedy! I don't want to think about it.'

He had no friends or relations, she told him. He was a fairly wealthy man, and when he asked her how his estate was disposed she answered frankly.

'I think he's left everything to me,' she said. 'He told me he would years ago, and he referred to it again on the boat. He wasn't murdered?'

Luke hesitated; he did not rule out that possibility.

'I don't think so. The doctors are under the impression that he died a natural death.'

He questioned her about the old man. Had he ever taken drugs of any kind? She repudiated this instantly.

'He had a horror of drugs—never even took medicine. He invariably went into Buenos Aires for osteopathic treatment when he wasn't feeling well.'

They drove down together to Longhall, and Luke slept shamelessly all the way and was hardly awake when he fell on a bed in the guest room to continue his slumber.

By nine o'clock that night he was very much awake and alert, and spent a solid hour at the telephone. At eleven o'clock Lane called for him, and they went out together, after arranging with the butler to wait up for his return.

It was three o'clock in the morning when he came back to find a sleepy-eyed girl dozing in her chair. His boots and clothes were covered with dust, and Lane was in no better state. If she expected him to tell her where he had been, or to satisfy her natural curiosity, she was to be disappointed. He told her that he had a successful night, but in what way he was successful he would not say.

When he came back to London he learned from his

immediate superior that a complaint had been lodged against him with the Commissioner.

'By Blanter, of course? Unprofessional conduct, bullying, third degree, impertinence . . .'

'A little of each,' said his chief. 'The Commissioner has left me to deal with it. We'll let it stand over for a day or two. Are you going to Newmarket?'

Luke nodded.

'Blanter you'll never get,' said the superintendent confidently; 'he's much too clever. One is always reading about these master criminals, but the police never meet them, and for the excellent reason that they're not caught. The moment a man's pinched he ceases to be a master and goes back to the working classes! Blanter has never been caught.'

'We'll give him a new experience,' said Luke with equal confidence.

The doctor was an energetic and a tireless man. An inquiry put through to Maidenhead disclosed the fact that his Maidenhead house had been sold after two days' negotiation. He had sold it at a bargain price, which was significant, for Blanter was a good business man and would never get rid of a property except at a profit, unless he was in a hurry; and he was in the greatest hurry he had ever been in his life.

J. P. Trigger was to learn something of that urgency. He had a call from the doctor, and Blanter's demands were both exorbitant and difficult to fulfil. Only Trigger knew that they were not impossible.

'Be reasonable, Doctor. I can't find you two hundred thousand pounds at a minute's notice. The money is invested as fast as it is made—you know that—and we can't divvy up before the end of November.'

'You'll get that money, Trigger; you'll get it in American currency. It's got to be here ready for me when I call.'

The little man leaned back in his chair and met the menace of the doctor's eyes without flinching.

'If the Transaction comes off there'll be no difficulty, of course,' he said. 'Otherwise I shall have to sell stock at a loss. What's the hurry?'

Blanter did not explain. That was not his way. He was used to implicit obedience, and his first inclination was to fly in a rage at the opposition which was being shown to him. Second thoughts prevailed. He had already sensed this antagonism on the part of his once willing agent. He had perfect command of his emotions when he so willed and, sitting down in a big chair, he lit a cigar.

'Don't let's quarrel,' he said. 'If you want to know what the hurry is, it's Mr. Luke. So far as I'm concerned, the Green Ribbon has had my last horse. It won't hurt you, because you've got plenty of money, and I suggest that you liquidate your business, sell the offices and retire...'

'Listen, Doctor.' The little man leaned his elbows on the blotting-pad and tapped the desk to emphasise his words. 'Trigger's Agency existed before you'd ever heard of it—what's more, before I'd ever heard of you except as a mug punter who'd been before the coroner and had a narrow squeak. It will go on existing without you. I never asked you how you got the horses that I operate, what you did with them or how you persuaded them to win. That's not my business. If you've done anything illegal I know nothing about it. So far as I know, Field of Glory is going to win the Cambridgeshire on Wednesday; I've advised all clients and I've a record of their bets. Why it should win or why it shouldn't win I don't

know, and don't want to know. There are other sources of information besides yours—other stables and other horses besides Goodie's. If you've done anything illegal that's your affair and not mine. Mr. Luke I regard as a fair-minded man, and I'm certainly not scared of him.'

He got up from the table, walked round to the other side of the desk and stood, looking down at Blanter.

'A man named Garcia was found dead this morning. I've seen it in the evening newspapers. And a little racing tout named Punch Markham was found dead in the City.'

'Well?' said the doctor, when he paused.

'I'm only asking you for the sake of asking. They've nothing to do with our business, have they?'

And then the doctor made a false move.

'Suppose they have?' he said.

Trigger did not reply, and Blanter repeated the question.

'I'd walk straight out into the street, get a policeman and pinch you,' said Trigger slowly. 'If I thought that little chat which Rustem started and which I stopped had anything to do with murder, I'd shop you, as God's my judge!'

The doctor rose slowly to his feet, a commanding and terrifying figure in his cold fury. Only Trigger was not easily terrified.

'What do you think would happen to you?' he asked with deadly softness.

Trigger smiled.

'I might have to explain to the Coroner why I shot you stone dead!' he said.

He had his hand in his jacket pocket, and for the first

time Blanter saw the bulge of the levelled barrel.

'I never take a chance with you, Blanter, and I'm not taking one now. You can clear out, and if there's any money to divide after this Transaction you'll get it.'

Dr. Blanter found himself in Lower Regent Street, a dazed man. He might have respected J. P. Trigger if he had been capable of respecting anybody.

At Half Moon Street Doctor Blanter's man was sitting in his master's study, smoking one of the doctor's best cigars. The doctor's decanter was on the table and a glass half filled with whisky and soda. Stoofer rose only to help the doctor to a drink before reseating himself, and Blanter took no exception to the familiarity.

'Did you see Goodie?'

'No,' said Blanter.

The corner of Stoofer's ugly mouth lifted.

'He's got no more brains than a rabbit,' he said. 'He asked me what the new box was for—he see me drivin' it on the North Circular—that old devil certainly misses nothing.'

'Why were you driving it on the North Circular Road?' asked Blanter carelessly.

'Tryin' out the engine. The crate was inside too—she was delivered yesterday and I had a bit of practice fitting her wings—where do we take off?'

'At Goodie's place. I wish he was in Sussex—that would be easier—but it's lonely enough. Will the plane hold two?'

Stoofer sneered at him.

'Four,' he said. 'It's a pretty machine.'

The friendship between the doctor and this uncouth man of his was notorious. They had certain crudities in common, and Stoofer had been more nearly concerned

in certain black incidents of Blanter's past than Luke knew. Had he read the Blanter records again, he would have learned that the man who was concerned with the doctor in the worst charge that had been brought against him, and who eventually received a sentence of five years, was the same man who now lived luxuriously at Blanter's expense. He had been convicted as 'John Ernest', which were his Christian names.

When Stoofer was very drunk it was his practice to tell his employer that it was in his power to give him a 'lifer'.

'I suppose the Cambridgeshire business will go through?' He poured himself out a liberal portion of whisky as he asked himself the question. 'Goodie isn't worrying, now we've got that white-livered Turk on the chain. He was the danger.'

'What are you going to do with him?' asked Stoofer. The doctor was non-committal.

'We'll see. Have you fixed everything for tomorrow?' Stoofer nodded.

'I got a French chauffeur and I've hired the lorry. You may not want to use 'em.'

'And I may,' said Blanter shortly. 'I'm relying on you, Stoofer—the timing, I mean. I don't want to take a chance. If anything happens . . .'

He shrugged.

'Nothing'll happen,' scoffed the man. 'Shall I go down to the cellar and get another bottle, or will you?'

'As you're my servant it would be a good idea for you to earn your money,' said the doctor good-humouredly.

Nevertheless, it was he who went. In the course of the next twenty-four hours he would have to rely a great deal upon this brute of his, and it was advisable to keep him in good humour.

6

All journeys passed very quickly to Luke, because he had a great deal to think about, and it seemed that he had hardly stepped into his car outside the entrance of New Scotland Yard than he was raising his hat mechanically to the Ditcher for, if he did not bet, he had a punter's superstition.

Though the weather was none too propitious, the town was crowded and cars bowled down the broad road to the stands three abreast. His own stopped at a little gate and he slipped into the paddock, unobserved, to find it already crowded, though the numbers were not in the frame for the first race.

In point of interest the Cambridgeshire Handicap takes second place to the Cesarewitch, but this year there were half a dozen horses genuinely fancied; and, with the heaviest betting that the race had known for many years, public interest was unusually keen.

Luke had half an hour's conversation with certain officials of the Jockey Club, and by the time he came out of the little room the attendance in the paddock had doubled in size.

He did not see the first race, but visited in turn every man he had posted at the exits from the enclosures. Goodie he had seen, a solitary figure in his favourite position, the most distant corner of the paddock. It was

while Luke was visiting his 'sentries' that Blanter's big Rolls arrived, and the doctor climbed out and came through the paddock gate.

'That's the car: watch it—if necessary throw it out of action.'

He did not underrate Blanter's ingenuity. He was dealing with an extraordinary genius, who had devoted great powers to base uses. Nevertheless, they were great powers. Blanter never failed to cover his tracks—that had been the history of him all his life. He was such a good general that it was certain he would prepare a way of retreat. He had said to Luke almost the first time he had fallen under suspicion: 'I can foresee mine. That's where I've got you, Luke, and where I'll keep you.'

Before the Cambridgeshire the paddock was uncomfortably crowded and it was impossible to get anywhere near the horses. Strolling into the ring, Luke learned that Field of Glory was one of the strongest favourites the race had known. He stood nominally at 5—2, but it was impossible to get a bet about him. The detective heard bookmakers refusing bet after bet with a laconic: 'Can't offer you a fair price.'

There is no parade of horses at Newmarket, no bands or flowers, nothing but plain racing. The horses went down to the nine-furlong post in ones and twos and threes. Presently Luke saw a beautiful bay horse loping down by himself.

'That's the winner. He looks as if he could pull a bus and win,' said a voice at his elbow.

Certainly there was no horse in the field which carried his bloom or moved in such effortless style. His long stride covered an immensity of ground. Luke glanced at

the number-board and saw that it was drawn No. 1, the best position in the race.

He went on to the lower steps of the stand to watch the race. There was a long delay at the start; horses weaved in and out, two refused to go near the gate, and a third took it into his head to bolt in the opposite direction. The field must wait until he was overpowered and brought back. Slowly the horses were manœuvred into line, and then :

‘They’re off!’

Ten thousand voices said the words at once; it sounded like the boom of a cannon.

Right across the course, like a regiment of cavalry charging, they flew, and at the distance it was almost impossible for any but the most skilful observer to tell which was in front. Luke had glued his eyes to the bright green cap of the horse on the rails. He was galloping with the greatest freedom. It was clear to him, as it was to thousands of trained watchers, before the field came into the dip, that Field of Glory, going easily on the stand side, was not only in front but could never be caught. He passed the post, pulling up, a winner by three lengths.

Luke ran back into the paddock to the far side of the unsaddling enclosure and waited. He saw Goodie walk slowly into the space reserved for the winner, and presently the jockey of Field of Glory appeared above the heads of the crowds and the horse walked into the enclosure. Goodie caught him by the bridle and held him while the jockey dismounted and unsaddled; then together they went into the weighing-room with Luke at their heels. He could not see the doctor, but did not doubt that he was somewhere near.

The jockey had seated himself on the scales when Luke

passed a slip of paper to the clerk, who read it.

'You object to this horse, Mr. Luke?'

'I object to this horse,' said Luke, 'on the grounds that he is not Field of Glory, but a horse imported from the Argentine, named Vendina, who was purchased from the late Señor Garcia for stud purposes in Germany.'

Goodie's face was a mask: he displayed no evidence of emotion whatever.

'A stupid charge,' he said heavily. 'The matter will go before the stewards, I presume? I shall be handy.'

He walked out of the weighing-room, a detective at his elbow. No effort was made to stop him till he was outside, and then the detectives closed on him.

The watchers did not see the doctor until he appeared from the direction of Tattersalls, walking along the line of cars. The fact that the chauffeur was not at the wheel of Blanter's car was responsible for their carelessness. A big American car that was pulling out passed the doctor and for a moment blotted him out of view. When it had passed he had disappeared. It was not until the American car was well clear of the gates that they realised what had happened. Blanter had had two cars parked; he had slipped into the second vehicle as it had come abreast of him and had half a mile start.

Luke, who came out at that moment, and learned the truth, did not even stop to curse the detectives who had been fooled but, jumping into a police car, which was already moving, he went in pursuit.

The big car was almost out of sight. There was no chance of signalling the Cambridgeshire police who were doing duty on the road. The car swung towards London, a quarter of a mile ahead of Luke, and was going almost as fast as he.

They had passed the fork of the Cambridgeshire road and were moving for Six Mile Bottom when the cunning of Blanter was revealed. A big lorry which had been standing on the grass verge backed on to the road so as to block it. It was done so cleverly that at first Luke thought it was an accident; but it was a little too clever, for the lorry had not moved till the doctor's car had passed. One of the detectives in the police car jumped up by the side of the driver.

'You're under arrest! Pull your lorry straight, or I'll take my stick to you!'

By the time the lorry was straightened, Blanter's car was out of sight. There was another obstruction: a big horse van, coming towards Newmarket, but this pulled aside to allow them to pass.

Blanter had seemingly forgotten one danger: the possibility that the level-crossing gates at Six Mile Bottom might be closed. They were in fact shut when the car came up, and they only opened again when the police vehicle was within a hundred yards of its quarry. Both cars flew along the road, Luke gaining steadily. It was at the juncture of the Royston and Newport roads that the police tender overtook and passed the American car and pulled up with a jar of brakes.

Luke did not recognise the driver; he was a stranger, and obviously foreign. Running round to the side of the car, the detective jerked open the door.

'Step out, Doctor.'

But the car was empty. On the floor lay a race card. He took it up, and saw something written on a blank page. The handwriting was jerky; it was evidently intended for him, and it ran:

‘I expected this. Sorry to disappoint you.’

Luke placed the driver of the car under arrest and rushed back to make enquiries at Six Mile Bottom. It was here that the man must have escaped, and he had probably caught the train that had been responsible for the closing of the gates. To his amazement, he learned that nobody had got out of the car, that the train did not stop at Six Mile Bottom but was a through express.

‘I’ll swear the car was empty except for the chauffeur, because I looked into it,’ said one of the railwaymen.

If the car had been empty at Six Mile Bottom where had this man made his escape? There had been time for the car to slow, or even stop, while Luke was ridding himself of the obstructing lorry. But where would he have gone? There was no house; the country was open. Blanter was not the sort of man who would fly to the woods.

He came back to the course to find the rings seething. The horse had not been disqualified, and the decision of the stewards was suspended. Goodie had been removed to the town police station and had made no protest.

He interviewed the trainer in his little cell, but had little satisfaction from him. Goodie refused to talk, or offer the least assistance. He was seemingly uninterested in the fate of his partner, and not greatly concerned about his own. Luke took him back to London, handcuffed, and lodged him at Cannon Row for the night.

The position was still a little obscure, and there was a possibility, as his timorous superior did not fail to point out to him, that Goodie might still acquit himself of the charge. The Jockey Club had taken the usual course of suspending a decision, as they were bound to do until proof had been adduced. A logical act, but one which

led to a great deal of confusion amongst ready-money bettors, who were thus deprived of drawing their winnings on the first or the second.

‘I’ll get proof enough,’ said Luke.

He would have sent his best man to take possession of Goodie’s house, but here arose one of those technical difficulties which so often hamper the administration of justice. Goodie’s house was under different police jurisdiction. There had been some trouble between Scotland Yard and the local constabulary, and though the Yard was within its rights in sending a man, it was decided to leave the matter in the hands of the local police.

And then a thought occurred to Luke and he got in touch with the Berkshire C.I.D. It was in consequence of that communication that the house was not even visited by the authorities that night.

One thing could be done. Mr. Trigger was summoned to headquarters and asked to give an account of himself and his Transactions. As had been expected, he had the most complete documentary proofs that he was not concerned except in the sending out of horses, that he had no communication whatever with the doctor except on that subject.

A second search of the doctor’s house was made and a police officer left in control. That Blanter would attempt to go to London, Luke did not for one moment expect; what he was more likely to do was to make for an unlikely seaport and get a passage to the Continent. The recognised ports and airports were notified as a matter of course. At any rate, for one relief he was thankful: with Goodie in prison and Blanter in flight, the danger to the girl was, he thought, reduced to an inconsiderable factor. Here, however, he was unduly optimistic.

Nothing had been seen of Rustem; possibly he had retired to his place of retreat, which for some reason never thoroughly explained, was Edinburgh.

Pilcher was almost tearful when he protested that he knew nothing of his master's whereabouts except that he had said it was unlikely he would be in the office on the day of his disappearance. That the man was speaking the truth was confirmed by enquiries at Rustem's flat. If he had fled the country he would at least have taken with him the £2,000 which was found when the police forced the drawers of the desk in his study.

There had been many misguided excuses made for the local police. It was pointed out that they did not immediately occupy Gillywood Cottage because no specific charge had been made against its owner, and certainly not the charge of murder which was subsequently preferred.

The apologists would have saved themselves a great deal of speculation if they had overheard Luke's conversation with the Berkshire police chief on the subject of dogs.

It was about eight o'clock in the evening when the watchful Lane saw a big horse box come along the road. It passed the entrance to Gillywood Cottage and disappeared in a southerly direction. A horse box returning to one of the many training establishments within range of a few miles was not an unusual spectacle on the evening of a big race meeting. Lane thought nothing of it; he did not see the lights extinguished, or the big truck turn off the road.

Though it had all the appearance of a horse box, it held no horses, and a big man had been sleeping half the journey in the compartment usually reserved for the stable

lad. The driver got down and jerked open the door.

'Here you are, guv'nor,' he said.

Dr. Blanter got down laboriously and stretched his legs. He had been a long time cooped up in that narrow cell, for the 'box' had gone through Newmarket, taken a wide detour and come back through Cambridge.

If Luke had enquired he would have found that it had been waiting between Six Mile Bottom and Newmarket since two o'clock that afternoon, just as the obstructing lorry had been waiting. He had never dreamed that an innocent-looking van going towards Newmarket could contain his prey, yet that had been the case. By the simplest of tricks Dr. Blanter had escaped immediate arrest. He had come back here, not because he regarded the cottage as a place of refuge, but believing that in the excitement of the day Luke would do exactly what he had done—relax his vigilance over Elizabeth Gray. Moreover, the wide downs and the grassy valley offered solitude for the assembling of the tiny aircraft which the van held, and a favourable taking-off place for the long journey which would begin at dawn.

Goodie's house might be, and probably was, in the possession of the police. But of one thing he was sure: Rustem would not have been found or have told his story. Blanter was not concerned; his own fate was sealed unless he made his escape from England. He had no doubt in his mind, however, that he would succeed.

And the police would have found the big cats, too. He bared his teeth in a smile at the thought. How could these bucolics deal with that problem?

The presence of the horse box would pass undetected until the morning, and in the night Stoofer could do his work. For Stoofer had spent certain years as an aircraft

fitter. It was indeed he who had suggested to the doctor an infallible method of escape.

The broad, even meadows which ran along the base of the downs were admirably suited for the purpose. It had always been the doctor's idea that this should be his jumping-off place. Big a man as he was, he was light of foot. The groom working in the stable yard of Longhall neither saw nor heard the shadow that passed. Blanter made a careful reconnaissance of the house. There were, he knew, two male staff—three if Lane were included. He knew, too, that they were ex-police officers, specially chosen by Luke, and the reason for the detective's anxiety he could guess.

After a long search of the dark courtyard he found at last what he sought—a ladder—and, lifting this from its supporting peg, he planted it against the wall near the open window of what he knew was the girl's bedroom. It would have been his own room if he had succeeded in buying the property, for it was Blanter on whose behalf Rustem had negotiated.

And then he heard a sound which made him stiffen. He crouched back against the wall.

From where he stood he could see the angle of the stable, and the glow of its reflected light, spread fan-wise across the tiled floor of the yard. It was Elizabeth's voice he heard, speaking to the groom. Evidently she had come out at the front of the house, and had passed across the lawn to the stables. She was ordering her horse for the morning.

He crept along till he came to the angle of the wall and looked round. He could see the back of her; she wore a long coat which she must have slipped on as she came out of the house, and she was bareheaded. A horse started

to kick in the stable, and the groom went out of hearing. For a while the girl stood, watching, and then turned back towards the house. She changed her mind and, turning to the left, walked to where Blanter stood in hiding. She did not see him, but the ladder was silhouetted against the sky. He heard her utter a little exclamation, and made his decision. She felt a huge hand suddenly close over her mouth and an arm pass round her waist.

‘If you make a sound I’ll throttle you, my girl!’ said a whisper in her ear.

She struggled madly to escape from this clutch, but his arm was like steel and the hand on her mouth immovable. Suddenly he felt her sag in his arms, and the weight of her told him that her faint was genuine. He heard the slam of a door and looked round cautiously. Then came the clatter of heavy feet on the yard, and he carried the girl to the angle of the wall and, peering round saw the groom disappearing in the direction of the house.

He lifted her without effort, passed quickly in front of the stable door, and through the side gate. She was still unconscious when he reached the van. The man who had been drinking tea from a vacuum flask sprang up.

‘You didn’t get her?’ he asked exultantly. ‘My God, that’s a bit of luck, Doctor! Here, I’ll carry her.’

‘You needn’t,’ said Blanter curtly.

They passed over the dark ground and they were nearing the foot of the downs when he heard her moan and felt her move in his arms. Setting her down, he felt in his pocket and took out a small case.

What he had to do could be done in the dark. The sharp pain in her arm brought her to consciousness. She moaned a little. They stood in silence, watching her, till her head drooped again.

'There's nobody in the cottage, guv'nor,' said the man under his breath. 'I went in and had a look round.'

'How did you get in?' asked the other sharply.

'I picked the lock of the wire door—the one in the corner. It was easy.'

'Did you leave it open?'

'No, I just left it on the latch. Why?'

He heard the doctor breathing quickly.

'Nothing,' he said. 'Come along.'

He stooped to pick the girl up, and did not put her down until they came to the iron-barred gate which covered the mouth of Perrywig Cave. This the doctor unlocked and they passed through together, the gate closing softly behind them.

'If you feel in one of those holes in the side of the rock, you'll find a torch. Don't put it on till I tell you.'

The cave ran straight for about fifty yards, then turned gently at right angles. Here was another gate, also to be unlocked.

'You can put on the light now.'

The cavern in which they found themselves was twice the height of an ordinary room. There was a high-powered car here, covered with a cloth; and around the wall was a series of rough chambers cut out of the solid rock. Blanter put the girl down with her back to the wall and, strolling to one of the recesses, flashed the torch in the sleeper's eyes.

'Wake up, little Arthur,' he said pleasantly.

The huddled figure which lay on a bed of straw woke with a start and stared, blinking, at the man whom, of all men in the world, he feared.

'Hullo, Doctor!' he said, with a pathetic attempt at

geniality. 'There's something mediaeval about this, isn't there, old boy?'

As he moved his leg there was the clank of a chain. It was fastened to a leglet about his ankle and the other end of a staple fixed in the rock.

'A bit mediaeval, I think you'll agree; and all because of a baseless suspicion ...'

'Don't talk,' said Blanter coldly. 'I want to give you the news. They've caught Goodie and they're after me and you.'

The white-faced man rose unsteadily to his feet. The chain was a very long one, which gave him almost the run of the main cavern.

'What's the charge?' he asked.

'I don't know what it is, but I'll tell you what it will be,' said Blanter, carelessly. 'Wilful murder—we're all in it, Rustem, except you.'

'Not me, not me!' said the prisoner, waving his hands hysterically. 'I knew nothing about it. I told you ...'

'I said, "except you",' he said. 'You wouldn't be in it because you'd be the chief witness for the state. Which is unfortunate for you!' The doctor's voice was gentle, almost caressing.

'I've brought you a little friend. But she's not here to keep you company—disabuse your mind of that idea.'

Then Rustem saw the girl.

'Miss Gray!' he said, in horror.

'You may call her Elizabeth,' smiled Blanter. 'I'll give you permission. After you're gone, she's going to amuse us—Stoofer and me. Stoofer and I have identical ideas on the subject. If we're going to be hanged we might as well run the gamut of offence!'

Rustem stared at him in a horror that he did not

attempt to conceal. He was a thief, a swindler, by any standard a villain, but . . .

‘You can’t do that, Doctor! My God, you can’t do that!’

Even as he spoke he knew that this gross man was capable of deeds as vile. In that old case in which Blanter had been involved, and for which Rustem had defended him, there had been details which had turned him sick . . .

The doctor looked at him, amused. Across his face was a broad, leering grin. Arthur Rustem was a coward, physically and morally, and yet at this moment, when he knew that death was at hand, he felt no qualm of fear. He suddenly realised, though there was no apparent reason for his understanding, that the girl had recovered consciousness and was listening. Her head still drooped forward in a way that reminded him of Goodie. It was a ludicrous comparison; he would have laughed, but if he laughed he would become hysterical, and if he was hysterical he was lost. He knew the doctor, knew him better than any man living, knew exactly with what cold-blooded indifference the man would encompass his end.

The doctor took a small bunch of keys from his pocket and held one up.

‘We will release you from your mediaeval surroundings in a minute or two. I shall want to anklet my little friend over there. It’s a new anklet—the last was broken by your predecessor.’

‘By “release” I suppose you mean . . . ?’

‘Exactly,’ said the doctor. ‘You’re too dangerous, Rustem, and you’re rather a fool too. I think it will be better for all concerned, though we shall be sorry to lose you,’ he added, with mock sympathy. ‘Wait a moment.’

Rustem saw his hand go into his pocket and interrupted the action.

'A long time ago, Blanter, you told me about Kelacine. You said that if ever you went out, that was the way you'd go.'

The doctor smiled.

'Marvellous man—marvellous memory!'

He took out his little case, opened it and selected a tiny flat phial.

'I'm very glad you're so sensible and not giving me a lot of trouble. I have anticipated your wishes—Tincture Kelacine was exactly the medicine I had prescribed.'

Elizabeth, wide awake now, watched the drama being played, frozen with horror. Rustem she recognised; the long chain about his ankle explained many things.

There was furniture in the cavern, and apparently near at hand was a water supply, for the doctor disappeared through an opening and came back with a glass half-filled with water, some of which he spilt on the ground.

'What is the effect of this dope?' asked Rustem.

The doctor did not answer: drop by drop little colourless beads were falling from the mouth of the phial.

'One minim produces paralysis,' he said slowly; 'two or three drops, according to your constitution, death. I am giving you six—or rather, you are taking six of your own free will.'

'Make it sixty,' said Arthur Rustem coolly. 'I would like it over very quickly.'

Again the doctor smiled.

'Spoken like a gentleman,' he said, and emptied the contents of the phial into the glass.

Stoofer watched, fascinated. Elizabeth could just see past him, saw Rustem take the glass with a trembling

hand. He held it up to the light.

‘Do you mind unfastening my anklet first? I’d hate to die in chains.’

Blanter looked at him quickly, took a key from his pocket and, stooping, turned it. A snapping sound and the anklet hinged back.

‘Thank you.’

Rustem was politeness itself; but for his quivering hand, none might imagine that he laboured under any stress of emotion.

‘Now, before I go, I’ll tell you a secret.’ He was watching the big man closely. ‘If I had escaped this, I intended going into a monastery.’ He spoke with great deliberation.

Blanter’s eyebrows went up and his big mouth opened.

It was a grimace which invariably accompanied his intense amusement, and was invariably followed by his deafening laughter. Nobody knew this better than Rustem. As the big mouth opened, with a quick jerk of his wrist he dashed the contents of the glass into the man’s face. Blanter staggered back; his hand reached to his pocket; and then, with a squeal of agony, he fell to his knees, his face blue.

Stoofer rushed forward and caught him by the arm. In that second Rustem made his leap; he gripped the girl by the arm and jerked her to her feet.

‘Run!’ he snarled.

The gate was unlocked. He crashed it back, hoping it would close itself. The outer gate, he knew, was locked, but he had snatched up the key which the doctor had dropped, and with trembling hands he turned it in the lock.

He heard feet stumbling behind him, had not the cour-

age to stop and lock the gate, but ran.

'Do you know the way to your house?' gasped Rustem.

Between fear and weakness she could hardly keep on her feet. She could only gasp something which was unintelligible to the man.

Somebody was running behind them—Stoofers probably. It seemed impossible to the girl that she could last out. The house was a terrifying distance away, the ground so uneven that she stumbled with every few steps.

Rustem looked over his shoulder and, to his horror, saw the looming figure of the doctor. They had reached the corner of the wire compound when she stumbled and fell against the wire. It swung away from her and she realised it was the door. Rustem had seen the avenue of escape and ran in after her, slamming the gate behind him, but it did not fasten.

She flew ahead, heard the sound of a struggle behind her and fled towards the cottage. Then something rose in front of her, and she stood stock still. The scream that rose to her throat was never uttered; she was paralysed with fear, for four green eyes looked out of the blackness, and suddenly she heard a hideous howl from the Things before her which made her blood turn to ice.

Panthers! Two great black panthers! She knew what they were—and then her senses left her, and she went down to the ground in a heap. Something else was engaging the attention of the two beasts—a shouting, panting huddle of men. Again that scream from the panthers' throats. One leaped forward, and Dr. Blanter turned to meet the charge. Twice he fired, and then there was an unearthly howl of pain and the second panther leaped. As he struck, a rifle exploded near at hand, and then

another. The black beast slid wearily from his mangled victim by the side of his dead mate.

It was a bad dream, Elizabeth Gray decided, and tried to sit up on the couch where she was lying. Her head was swimming; she was curiously weak, and she sank back again. Somebody was bathing her forehead and neck with Eau-de-Cologne.

'You keep quiet, young lady.'

It was Luke's voice. When she opened her eyes again he was sitting on a stool by the side of the couch, looking singularly old, as a man might pardonably look when he had shot at a panther in the dark and was not absolutely certain whether the bullet would hit the beast or its victim, was not even sure that the prey of the beast was not the woman he loved.

It was two o'clock in the morning when she became quite sensible and demanded the story.

'No more hysteria,' he warned her.

'It wasn't hysteria, it was nerves,' she said indignantly.

'I came down; it was a whim of mine—one of those inspirations, I suppose, that every clever police officer has. I didn't dream I was going to shoot a panther, or pick up a bedraggled female in a dead faint.'

His tone was flippant, but she realised something of what he had endured.

'Yes, they were Goodie's panthers; that's why he lived in a cage. He bred them; they had the run of the compound, which included the house. They lived in an underground vault, which was probably at some time the vault of a church in which your illustrious ancestors laid their old bones. That's why I didn't want the police to go there, until I'd dealt with them. They never came

out in the day time, but by night they were a very effective guard against burglars! Goodie didn't realise the effect they'd have on horses, and had to move them to new stables, well away from the smell of the big cats.

'Goodie had a lot of secrets in that little cottage, including an autobiography, which I'm going to read with great enjoyment. He swears there's nothing in it that could convict him, but we may alter all that.'

She told him of the cavern, but he had heard that from Rustem before the ambulance had taken him to hospital.

'Yes, I know, that's where they kept poor old Garcia. He recognised the horse that he thought was in Germany, in the string with Goodie's other horses. He came down here to make sure, and stayed at the Red Lion. Rustem must have had him watched and, when he realised the secret was out, there was a consultation.

'You remember Rustem came in a hurry to Doncaster? It was to tell the gang that Garcia was staying in the village and had recognised the horse. Rustem told me that he discovered that and went up to Doncaster to tell the others. In some way they got hold of Garcia that same night and imprisoned him in the cavern. Probably he made an attempt to escape, for they had a chain fixed to the wall; I think you'll find it's a fairly recent innovation.

'In some way or other Garcia got the leg iron off, made his way through the cave and, by a miracle, found the passage which led to the smallest of the caves. He broke down the flimsy gate with a stone, and for days lay in hiding.

'His escape nearly put the cat amongst the pigeons. He knew that Field of Glory was not Field of Glory at all, but Vendina, from the Argentine. I don't know how

they found him, but he was run to earth and taken to a little cottage, the property of Goodie. He was there transferred to the doctor's car and taken either to Maidenhead or to Half Moon Street—I think the former place.

'I don't think he was ill-treated; I believe his death was due to natural causes, or else to the administration of the dope which they shot into him with the idea of keeping him quiet until they could smuggle him out of England.

'Rustem arranged all the telegrams which came from Germany. The person they were scared of was you.'

'Me?' she said, in amazement.

He nodded.

'At first they didn't want you to be there because you overlook their ground, and Goodie thought that you'd find out about the panthers and raise Cain with the local authorities. Then you became important because you were the only person in the world, or in England at any rate, who could supply information about Garcia. The third danger turned up in poor Punch.

'He must have seen the horse and known it wasn't the colt he sold. It was easy to identify: one foot was smaller than the others. The night this discovery was made, Goodie took the real Field of Glory and shot it. They were going for their last coup, on the Cambridgeshire, and the best authority tells me that if they'd won they'd have cleared half a million pounds. They had to get rid of Punch, and he played into their hands.

'It was an idea of the doctor's—Rustem didn't tell me this, because he doesn't know—one of his freakish, mad whims, to leave the body of Garcia in my room. The foggy night helped him. It was while he was there that Punch telephoned through, as he promised to do at

half-past ten. Dr. Blanter knew the game was up; Punch stood between him and an immense fortune. He made an appointment with the man, asked him to meet him on the Embankment. He would have known that on that night the fog on the Embankment was thicker than any other part of London. I don't think Punch knew the doctor, even by sight. He must have been shot down at close quarters.'

'Have you arrested Dr. Blanter or has he got away?'

'In a sense he's got away,' said Luke, and she shivered.

'Guilty,' said the jury.

Goodie looked round the court with expressionless eyes.

'And do you find the prisoner, Arthur Ralph Rustem, guilty or not guilty of obtaining money by fraud?'

'Guilty,' said the jury.

'And do you find the prisoner, Joseph Phidias Trigger, guilty or not guilty, of fraudulent practice?'

'Not guilty,' said the jury.

Mr. Trigger stepped down from the dock.

They say that Goodie expected seven years, and was relieved to get five; that Rustem expected three and was annoyed to get the same sentence as his confederate.

'The truth is,' said Rustem, speaking from the darkness of the police van that carried them to Wandsworth Prison, 'we're extraordinarily lucky not to be standing on the drop, as Stoofer will. You are, anyway. Five years . . .' Goodie heard him sigh. Then, in a brighter tone, Rustem said: 'If we get the usual reduction of sentence for good behaviour we shall be out in time for Ascot.'

The warder in charge listened with grim amusement. It was a time when prisoners might talk.

'That girl Gray, now—she married Luke on the day we were sentenced. I call that indecent.'



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that will be of interest.

On The Spot

Edgar Wallace

Tony Perelli was the biggest operator in the no-man's land of Chicago crime. From bootlegging and prostitution to murder, he fixed the board and raked off. Small or big fry – to Tony they were disposable. He had expensive dreams and ambitions to gratify. His taste for luxury and silken fantasy led him to Minn Lee, a half-Chinese mistress. To own her was essential.

But Perelli forgot the essential lesson for those seeking to climb the heights: loyalty has to be earned, it cannot be bought – certainly not by lead bullets.

Flat 2

Edgar Wallace

'If that is a threat, it makes me laugh. I am Emil Louba. I go my way, trampling or stepping over whatever is in my path. It is for others to choose whether I trample or step over. But I do not turn aside!

A philosophy that makes enemies. Many enemies.

But when Louba tried to ensnare Jane Martin, he put his life in real danger. Danger that led to the final horror in Flat 2.

When the Gangs came to London

Edgar Wallace

In this amazingly prophetic novel, Edgar Wallace spotted the trend of what eventually was to happen – the spread of American hot money and crime tactics throughout the world. The crooks who had battered onto Prohibition and Chicago prostitution needed new empires to build, and they looked first to London.

Luckily for over-pressed Scotland-Yard, Captain Jiggs Allerman of the Chicago Detective Bureau happens to be in England. A combination of his knowledge of the mobsters' tactics plus ruthlessness, in league with the finesse of London's police, bring a major victory to the forces of law and order.

The Mixer

Edgar Wallace

The underworld was becoming painfully aware of a man they called 'The Mixer'. He chose as his victims successful criminals who had enriched themselves at the expense of honest men. An elegant and ruthless operator, The Mixer robbed the swindler, confidence trickster and blackmailer alike.

In all his dealings with these villains, the Mixer was invariably one step ahead.

The Terror

John Creasey

A Doctor Palfrey Adventure

The new American tracking equipment didn't miss a thing. Any satellite, rocket, orbiting mass of debris, everything was spotted, tracked, accounted for. Sensors could unerringly sniff out the presence of nuclear warheads.

In Russia: a similar station, similarly sophisticated. In Britain, a third.

And all the stations had made the same discovery. An unidentified object was approaching the earth's atmosphere, carrying a nuclear warhead. Not a sneak attack from any of the great powers. No possibility of any of the smaller nations having secretly developed a nuclear capacity.

In England: an emergency conference, top secret, Dr Palfrey attending. A conference followed by an assassination attempt. Coincidence? If not; what was the connection?

Intent to Murder

John Creasey

Guy Chesney had been shot through the back of the head. Money had been stolen – nearly £1,000. Later a gun was found in Regent's Park.

A man had been questioned, charged, brought to trial, acquitted. Congratulated by his friends, by his fiancée who had stood by him, he had left the court. Lawyers complimented each other on the handling of the case. Justice had been done – visibly.

Later that night two men met and talked. They had one thing in common. Both knew that the murderer had just gone free.

Murder Being Once Done

Ruth Rendell

Kenbourne Vale Cemetery: an appropriate, if bleak, place for a burial. But the girl had not been interred, decently, with the proper rites.

She had been murdered; strangled, the body dumped in the Montford family vault between the stone sarcophagi, the whole tomb ill-lit, smelling of decay, damp, rotted grave flowers and stagnant water.

Chief Inspector Wexford shivered, hoped that she had died quickly and not there. Convalescent in London, the case was not his. But the professional habits of a lifetime cannot suddenly be switched off. Whatever the doctor's orders.

EDGAR WALLACE

THE GREEN RIBBON

When her uncle dies, Elizabeth Gray comes home from Argentina to inherit his fortune. But her intention to take up residence at Longhall doesn't coincide with the plans of certain sporting gentlemen – the clients of the notorious Green Ribbon agency.

As Detective Inspector Luke has long suspected, something less than legal is going on in the stables of nearby Gillywood Farm. Lucky for Elizabeth that he has more than a professional interest in her safety...



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